



# **A Study of the Drivers, Demand and Supply for Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)- Related Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for School Staff**

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## Glossary and Key Abbreviations

AET – Autism Educational Trust

BDA – British Dyslexia Association

COP – Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0-25 years 2014

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

DfE – Department for Education

EHC plan – Education, Health and Care plan

EQUALS – a not-for-profit registered charity, committed to supporting the work of teachers, TAs, schools and parents / carers of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) severe learning difficulties (SLD) and moderate learning difficulties (MLD)

ITT – Initial Teacher Training

LA – Local Authority

Low incidence needs - For the purposes of this document the term relates to conditions recorded with a prevalence of less than 4% of pupils recorded with SEN.

MAT – Multi-Academy Trust

MLD – Moderate Learning Difficulties

nasen – National Association for Special Education Needs

NASENCO – National Award for SEN Coordination

NASENCO Providers –The NASENCO Providers Partnership: Leading Learning for Special Educational Needs and Disability C.i.C

NatSIP – National Sensory Impairment Partnership

pdnet – Physical Disability Network

PRU – Pupil Referral Unit

RSC – Regional School Commissioner

SEMH – Social, Emotional and Mental Health

SENCO – Special Educational Needs Coordinator

SEND – Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities

SLCN – Speech, Language and Communication Needs

SLT – Senior Leadership Team

QTVI – Qualified Teacher of the Vision Impaired

QTHI – Qualified Teacher of the Hearing Impaired

QTMSI – Qualified Teacher for Multiple Sensory Impairment

WSS – Whole School SEND consortium

Within this report a '**driver**' is defined as a pressure on a school, a member of staff or external professional to seek out and identify SEND-related CPD. Such drivers or pressures can come from within the school such as the students on the roll or from the senior leadership team as well as externally as a result of an Ofsted report or change in government policy.

We define '**demand**' as factors which influence or facilitate the demand for, or use of, particular SEND-related CPD, such as how schools identify CPD needs and choose CPD.

We define '**supply**' as the availability of SEND CPD to schools, a member of staff or external professional across the age range, in both mainstream and special school settings.

# Executive summary

## Introduction

UCL Institute of Education undertook research to provide an in-depth understanding of the drivers, demands and supply for schools in relation to Special Educational Needs and /or Disability (SEND) related continuing professional development (CPD) in the context of English schools and education settings. This is part of the Whole School SEND programme, funded by the Department for Education (DfE), to help embed SEND into teacher training, CPD and School Improvement. It focuses on areas of school-linked SEND-related CPD: the drivers, demands and supply that make the workforce select, engage and implement SEND-related CPD and we examined the gaps and facilitators within the drivers, demands and supply for SEND-related CPD. We focus on the needs and practices of teachers, SENCOs, and school leaders specifically, but draw on issues relating to a wider range of professionals who contribute to supporting the learning needs of pupils, within and beyond schools themselves, through SEND-related CPD activity, including those who support children with low incidence needs, which, for the purposes of this document, relates to conditions recorded with a prevalence of less than 4% of pupils recorded with SEN.

## Approach

A mixed method approach was used to collect information for this project including:

- A 20 to 40 minute online survey for school staff from mainstream and special schools was sent out in batches, tailored to staff roles (e.g., senior leader, SENCO, teacher, etc.) and the type of school, between May to July and October to November 2018 via Whole School SEND and condition-specific sector organisations associated with the SEND Schools Workforce contract - Autism Education Trust, British Dyslexia Association, EQUALS, National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP), Physical Disability Network and The Communication Trust. Each survey consisted of a core of common questions (allowing us to aggregate data across survey waves) and a small number of audience-specific questions. Complete sets of data for 1178 individual staff responses were obtained across all the 15 surveys, including senior leaders in schools (n= 143); Special Educational Needs and Disability coordinators (SENCOs) and SEN managers (n= 598); classroom teachers (n= 151); Teaching Assistants (TAs) (n= 39); condition specific specialist teachers and professionals (n= 144); and 103 describing themselves as 'other'. However, not all respondents answered all questions and some identified more than one role. Therefore, base populations may vary. A breakdown of the responses by primary role and type of school is at Annex A.

- Eighteen follow-up phone interviews with respondents who had indicated via the survey that they were happy to be contacted for further information. 15-30 minute interviews were held with teachers (n= 7), SENCOs (n= 4), a head teacher and an assistant head teacher and various people in advisory roles, including a LA team lead, an advisory teacher, a national advisor and a LA head of sensory support services.

## Key Findings

### Key Finding 1: Drivers of SEND-related CPD

*Within this report, a ‘driver’ is defined as a pressure on a school, a member of staff or external professional to seek out and identify SEND-related CPD*

**In terms of CPD, no respondents reported SEND-related CPD as being a priority and overall there was little evidence of strategic responses to external or internal drivers within schools.** It was consistently reported across all types of responding schools that the two main drivers for SEND-related CPD came from within schools as opposed to external factors and included:

- Meeting the identified needs of children on a roll (36% of responses: 370/1027); and
- SEND CPD as part of a School Development Plan (35% of responses: 359/1027).

Overall, there was little indication that CPD training practices are evaluated properly and systematically across schools and it is currently unclear how CPD training fed into the schools’ CPD subsequent planning or identification of what was needed in the future.

### Key Finding 2: Barriers and facilitators of demand for SEND-related CPD

*‘Demand’ is defined as factors which influence or facilitate the demand for, and use of, particular SEND-related CPD, such as how schools identify CPD needs and choose CPD*

**Respondents across all types of schools reported that implementation of effective SEND-related CPD required the support of senior leadership teams (SLT)** to maintain staff interest and engagement in CPD. This SLT support was important in getting SEND training prioritised and sanctioned both financially and in terms of training time. When asked in an open question what helps staff to use a particular SEND-related CPD, comments (n= 1222) were classified into six themes considered to help facilitate demand:

- Quick and easy to use (24%: 289/1222);

- Cost: free, reasonable, funds available (8%: 92/1222);
- Seeing it demonstrated, being trained to use it, experience of using it (7%: 90/1222);
- Availability of resource (6%: 67/1222);
- Evidence or research-based (5%: 63/1222) and
- Recommended, word of mouth (4%: 51/1222).

Across mainstream schools, the major barriers to using SEND-related resources, strategies or training in the classroom were reported most commonly to be the cost of the activity, its time implications and its perceived efficacy. In addition to the barriers of cost and time, amongst the 19 special schools responding to the survey, 4 reported a lack of efficacy as a notable barrier. However, what this meant in practice was not specified.

### Key Finding 3: Availability and gaps in the supply of SEND-related CPD

**'Supply'** is defined as the availability of SEND CPD to schools, a member of staff or external professional across the age range, in both mainstream and special school settings

**The challenge for school staff was not the supply of SEND-related CPD, but teachers and SENCOs having sufficient opportunities (time and workload) to find out about, search for and access what CPD is available.** Once accessed, assessing its applicability to their school setting and assessing its evidence base and cost implications (including other staff time and implementation development time), were seen as important factors in relation to CPD provision.

A fifth of those respondents who answered the question (20%:194/943) identified specific gaps in SEND-related CPD. These were most commonly reported to be related to sensory impairment needs (5% of the gaps identified), physical disability (6%), and working with children with autism (13%). In addition, social and mental health related issues were also highlighted (8% and 11% respectively).

Survey respondents were asked an open question: *'How do you get to know about possible SEND-related training / CPD in your school?'* We received 849 answers summarised in five themes (with some respondents highlighting more than one theme):

- Information from emails including general and non-SEND-specific newsletters, or advertising general CPD (19%: 162/849)
- Information from the LA on CPD provision (18%: 154/849)

- Information found on the web or via social media (14%: 117/849)
- Information from non-LA commercial provision or third sector organisations or universities (6%: 50/849)
- Information from within the school setting, specifically from other staff (6%: 49/849)

The five main types of CPD suppliers, according to the surveyed respondents (n = 686) were:

- SENCOs (79%: 542/686);
- Local Authority (43%: 297/686);
- School team (19%: 134/686);
- Commercial organisation (18%: 124/686)
- Charity/third sector (14%: 93/686).

The overwhelming majority of training that did take place was delivered on the school site, usually in twilight sessions (3–6 pm) (57% of responses: 615/1072), which were usually between one to two hours in duration. Statutory training days were also used for SEND-related CPD linked to the school development plan, often for the whole school rather than individual teacher-specific work (52%: 562/1072). Linked to this, staff and SENCOs reported that they were seldom released from school for out of school CPD / training (a variety of reasons were offered including: keeping costs down, having minimal impact on staff workload, and minimising missed learning for pupils). Out of school training, when it did take place, was usually in close proximity to their school.

#### Key Finding 4: SEND specialist workforce: qualifications and CPD

**Across the SEND specialist workforce, the majority of respondents reported a need for training in how to provide and deliver effective CPD in schools.** Survey respondents who were sensory impairment and physical disability professionals who work in schools but are based in specialist support services (n = 144), did not highlight any gaps in CPD provision in relation to low incidence needs but reported difficulties: of gaining access to schools; of accessing staff time for training and of engaging SLT members in such training as a priority. For sensory impairment specialists and physical disability specialists, their own knowledge about how to support children with SEND in the classroom was often reported as limited and they themselves have CPD needs, including how to provide and lead CPD sessions. Thirty eight percent of SENCOs in our sample mentioned that they had never received any training in how to lead CPD training sessions, despite SENCOs providing the majority of SEND-related CPD sessions and many rely on learning on-the-job.

**At least a fifth of SENCOs and condition-specific specialists in the survey reported a lack of mandatory and/or relevant qualifications.** About 18% of the sensory impairment specialists (n= 78) in the current survey did not have the required mandatory qualifications. Although there are no mandatory qualifications for those working with physical disability, more than 20% of these specialists did not have any relevant qualification to support children with SEN and/or disabilities in general (n= 17 out of 70 responses). In relation to SENCO qualifications, 29% of SENCOs in our sample (n = 93 out of 320 responses) did not have the NASENCO Award and were not studying towards it.

#### Key Finding 5: Progression in SEND from Initial Teacher Training (ITT) to specialist practitioner

**There is no common pathway from ITT to specialist practitioner status.** Only a small number of respondents (n= 71) had progressed direct from Initial Teacher Training to a SEND specialism. There was little evidence that respondents had had opportunities to gain intermediate experiences or qualification progression-linked opportunities (through specific validated courses or particular instances or sequences of CPD activity). There was little evidence of any intermediate CPD that might lead a member of staff from post initial qualification moving on to SENCO or mandatory qualification progression. Even for experienced SENCOs, there were few SEND-related training opportunities (and updating activities) over time or regular CPD obligations as part of their SENCO status.

## Recommendations

In our findings as well as in practice, the drivers, demands and supply of SEND-related CPD are interlinked. This is reflected in our recommendations, which together, seek to take a holistic and systematic approach to moving practice in the sector forward. At the end of each recommendation we have indicated the specific finding/s addressed.

### Recommendation 1

The study highlighted the need for SLTs to ensure that SEND-related issues and CPD remain high on school development plans. Therefore, the **Whole School SEND consortium, through its SEND Regional Lead network, should support education settings to use data from the SEND Index<sup>1</sup> to accurately identify SEND-related priorities and therefore CPD needs.** (Key Finding 1).

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the SEND Index is to provide regional data by Regional School Commissioner (RSC) area, so that it can be used to compare with both the national picture and with other RSC regions. The SEND Index will be published on the [SEND Gateway: https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/whole-school-send/send-research/](https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/whole-school-send/send-research/)

## Recommendation 2

Education settings are generally adopting reactive rather than proactive strategies to identifying, implementing and evaluating SEND-related CPD. Currently, there is no common framework and little guidance to support schools in this process. Moreover, there is no common pathway from ITT to specialist SEND practitioner. Therefore, the DfE should consider publishing **guidance on SEND learning outcomes, linked to the Early Careers Framework** that would enable education settings to make more informed and strategic SEND-related CPD decisions, in addition to responding to the needs of the current pupils with SEN and/or disabilities in their settings. The content of such guidance could build on existing criteria-based frameworks for teacher competencies and skills such as The Autism Education Trust's Autism Competency Framework; the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust's Literacy Framework and Dyslexia-SpLD Professional Development Framework and the Communication Trust's Speech, Language and Communication Framework. (Key Findings 1, 2 and 5).

## Recommendations 3 and 4

The survey responses suggest that where SEND-related CPD resources are available, SENCOs and others have difficulties accessing these resources due to a combination of within school factors (lack of time and resources). Moreover, resourcing issues (such as cost) rather than strategic or evidence informed concerns can dominate what CPD is chosen. Therefore, a focus on the mechanisms to bridge this gap is required, particularly *from* SEND-related CPD suppliers *to* education settings, as this would enable SENCOS, for example, to make more informed decisions about SEND-related CPD resources. We make two recommendations to support this process. Firstly, at a regional level, the **Whole School SEND consortium, especially SEND Regional Leads, should focus on how to get SEND CPD messages into education settings as well as providing and signposting to CPD that reflects the priorities of a region.** Secondly, at a national level, **nasen should ensure that the SEND Gateway acts as an effective link to signpost the considerable SEND-CPD resources that already exist between the suppliers to the regions and individual education settings.** (Key Findings 2 and 3).

## Recommendation 5

There were inconsistent findings from the surveys and interviews regarding access to and the content of CPD resources on sensory impairment and physical disability. **CPD suppliers of sensory impairment and physical disability resources should collectively review the content of, and access to, CPD resources and report the findings to the sector.** (Key Findings 3 and 4).

## Recommendation 6

The findings showed that the vast majority of SEND-related CPD in school is delivered by the specialist SEND workforce including SENCOs and specialist teachers in sensory impairment and physical disability. However, this group reported a lack of training in how to deliver more effective CPD and lead change in their settings. **We recommend that the NASENCO providers group review the SENCO Award content on how to deliver CPD and lead change as well as create a CPD resource for current SENCOs to be added to the SEND gateway.** This resource should then be adapted for other specialist teachers by nasen. (Key Finding 4).

## Recommendation 7

A fifth of sensory impairment teachers and over a quarter of SENCOs who responded to the survey did not hold the mandatory qualifications. **Further investigation by DfE and Ofsted is recommended to ascertain a detailed, national picture of the qualifications held by specialist teachers and SENCOs.** (Key Finding 4)

# 1. Engagement with SEND-related CPD in English schools

## 1.1 Introduction and Aims

This project is part of the Whole School SEND programme, funded by the Department for Education (DfE), to help embed SEND into teacher training, continuous professional development (CPD) and School Improvement.

UCL undertook research to provide an in-depth understanding of the drivers, demand, supply and gaps relating to SEND CPD. The findings from this study will inform the activity of the SEND Schools' Workforce contract which aims to ensure the school workforce recognises the value of, and knows how to access, high quality training and CPD opportunities, and identify appropriate, evidence-based interventions in order to deliver high quality teaching across all types of SEND. It will also be used to inform DfE policy more widely.

The study focuses on the drivers, demands and supply of SEND-related CPD that make the workforce select, engage and implement it; and identifies facilitators for SEND CPD and gaps in the availability of it. We focus on the needs and practices of teachers, SENCOs, and school leaders specifically, but draw on issues relating to a wider range of professionals who contribute to supporting the learning needs of pupils, within and beyond schools themselves, through SEND-related CPD activity, including those who support children with low incidence needs.

Specifically, this project aimed to:

- Identify:
  - the drivers which act upon schools, school staff and external professions to seek out and identify SEND-related CPD (referred to hereafter as 'drivers');
  - the factors that influence or facilitate demand for SEND CPD - 'demands';
  - the availability of, and access to, appropriate SEND CPD – 'supply' and
  - any gaps that exist in the availability of SEND CPD – 'gaps'.
  
- Explore the role of the specialist workforce, including those that support children and young people with low incidence needs to inform the development of specialist qualifications.

The report focuses on the self-reported needs and practices of teachers, SENCOs and school leaders (Head teachers and members of a school's senior leadership team

specifically). It also draws on the views and issues reported by a wider range of professionals, including external service providers, as they contribute to supporting the learning needs of pupils, within and beyond schools themselves.

## 1.2 Context

The SEND Schools' Workforce contract takes a regionalised approach to its core activities, using the eight Regional School Commissioner (RSC) defined regions to organise and deliver activity across England. To support the Whole School Send consortium's activity, data was collected from across these eight regions.

However, as the number of types of schools (mainstream vs special, free versus independent) vary in proportion between the different RSC regions, and response rates were not considered to be representative of the RSC regions, no regional analyses were carried out.

## 1.3 Methodology

A mixed method approach was used to collect information for this project.

- A 20-40 minute online survey was issued to 15 separate mailing lists between May to July and October to November 2018. The survey for each mailing list consisted of a core of common questions (allowing us to aggregate data across survey waves) and a small number of audience-specific questions. Complete sets of data for 1178 individual staff responses were obtained.
- Eighteen follow-up phone interviews were held with respondents that had indicated via the survey that they were happy to be contacted for further information

### 1.3.1 Who we consulted

To identify and explore various school contexts and role perspectives, we sampled staff from a range of different types of schools: mainstream and special have been consulted, including Local Authority (LA), Academy and Free schools. We also included a range of different settings across the early years, primary, secondary and post-16 settings that were school-based. Independent schools, teaching schools and / or research schools and those that were part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) also figure in our data.

The first wave of surveys was aimed at Senior Leaders in schools; school-based Special Educational Needs coordinators (SENCOs), classroom teachers and their Teaching Assistants (TAs) and took place May to July and October to November 2018. Surveys were issued through existing, usually email-based, contact lists of a range of organisations. 691 responses were received through this wave of surveys.

In addition, we separately consulted with a range of specialist professionals who support classrooms and schools directly or indirectly, such as peripatetic teachers for the vision impaired, via condition-specific sector organisations associated with the SEND Schools Workforce contract - Autism Education Trust, British Dyslexia Association, EQUALS, National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP), Physical Disability Network and The Communication Trust. 487 responses were received through this wave of surveys and included specialist professionals as well as responses from SENCOs and other school based staff.

Complete sets of data for 1178 individual staff responses were obtained, including, senior leaders in schools (n = 143); Special Educational Needs and Disability coordinators (SENCOs) and SEN managers (n = 598); classroom teachers (n = 151); Teaching Assistants (TAs) (n = 39); condition specific specialist teachers and professionals (n = 144) and those describing themselves as 'other' (n = 103). However, not all respondents answered all questions and some identified more than one role. Therefore, base populations may vary. A breakdown of the responses by primary role and type of school is at Annex A.

A random selection of 15-30-minute follow-up phone interviews (n=18) were undertaken with different professionals within the school workforce in England including school leaders, staff and special education professionals from across the RSC regions in England. These focused on their experience of SEND-related CPD in the autumn term of 2018 and included staff across a broad range of schools and phases of education.

### **1.3.2 How we asked**

We used short online surveys, taking around 20-40 minutes to complete, created using the [Qualtrics software system](#), to gather our data, as well as a series of 15-30 minute follow-up interviews, where respondents gave their permission.

All responses were anonymous at an individual level, data was collected on region and characteristics of school for analytical purposes.

The Qualtrics software survey filtered questions so that an individual only answered questions related to their role in a school.

#### **Online surveys**

Partner organisations offered their view on relevant questions and these were added to the survey, where they were judged by the UCL research team to be consistent with the survey's goals.

It was possible particular individuals might be members of multiple organisations. Respondents were asked not to complete a second survey if asked to by another

organisation. After the initial survey link was sent out, we followed up with reminders at one and two weeks after the initial send-out date.

The survey occurred in three phases:

- general surveys targeting educational professionals with a common interest in special needs-related work.
- Education stages / school type surveys for both mainstream and special schools. These included MATs, Teaching Schools, and Research Schools.
- Special Educational Need specific organisations: AET, BDA, EQUALS, NatSIP, pdnet, and TCT.

All the surveys asked respondents to identify their principal role in school. They were also asked about additional roles whether in-school or in out-of-school services. (e.g. an LA peripatetic Teacher of the Deaf, an LA Head of Sensory Services and an LA Sensory Advisor).

Each survey offered respondents two additional options. First, a short follow-up interview at a time of their choosing. Second, respondents were offered the chance to receive an additional survey each term for the first full year of the project.

We aimed to gather a wide range of perspectives. Our targeting of the SEND workforce focused particularly on within-school staff. Surveys focusing on needs-specific organisations and their staff who engaged with schools (referred to as 'sector specific' in what follows) offer a perspective from outside of schools themselves around the common focus of SEND-related CPD. The focus was on employed staff and their CPD, therefore parental and pupil views were not collected.

As the surveys were disseminated through specialist partners, professional bodies and Teaching School networks, there may have been a bias in that those who responded to the surveys may have been activity engaged in SEND or school improvement.

Because UCL CIE did not send out the sector-specific surveys directly, we are unable to report the percentage returns. In addition, the timing of the project work spanned the introduction of new national data protection arrangements in England. We are not able to assess the extent to which survey distributing organisations had updated or compliant databases for this purpose, or whether the number of responses received reflects the number of those contacted by their respective organisations.

### **1.3.3 SEND types and how they are recorded**

A range of identifiable pupil learning and disability needs may present themselves in a school. Schools complete a termly census for the DfE, part of which focuses on special

educational needs. In the census, they are asked to identify the numbers of pupils on SEN Support and those with an EHC plan. These pupils are further categorised by defined categories based on primary type of need. Information from the school census on pupils with special educational needs (SEN), and SEN provision in schools can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2018>.

### **Low Incidence needs**

In this report, we group the less prevalent types of needs under 'low incidence needs' (for the purposes of this report we have set this as those with a prevalence of under 4.0% of pupils recorded with SEN in the census dataset above).

We include in this grouping the primary need categories of:

- Physical disability
- Severe Learning Difficulty
- Hearing Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty
- Multi-Sensory Impairment

These six categories occur at a low level of prevalence nationally, at a level of less than 4% of pupils recorded with SEN: their prevalence order may vary in particular RSC regions or for each constituent LA in an RSC region. These levels of frequency may translate into one or two pupils in a school per yearly intake. Depending on the extent of a pupil's needs in one of these categories, schools may already have expertise in the relevant area. A member of staff may be appropriately qualified and / or experienced in supporting the specific need. The SENCO may have additional expertise. Where a type of need has not been experienced before, the need for urgent CPD will be obvious. Under the Equality Act 2010, schools have a duty to disabled people to make reasonable adjustments to the way they do things, if that puts disabled people at a disadvantage. This duty is anticipatory and therefore a school should be anticipating a range of needs that will need to be supported.

Responses were gathered from all eight RSC regions in the WSS survey. However, across the different waves, there were fewer responses from the North of England region compared to the other regions. As response rates from the different regions were uneven, the data could not be analysed by region.

Among the school type specific surveys, regional gaps were also apparent across all the surveys. In addition, the distribution of different types of school was also uneven and some types of schools were under-represented in the current sample:

- Only 2 research schools (9%- 2/22) out of the number of Research schools in England (n= 22) responded.
- Four responses (0.5%- 4/738) from all MATS in England (n= 738) were received.
- Only 23 responses were from special schools of different types. As such our comments about SEND-related CPD for special schools may only be very crudely indicative of issues in special schools.

## 2. Within-school drivers of school engagement with SEND-related CPD in England

This chapter explores the drivers that lead schools and members of school staff in a variety of roles, including class teachers, SENCOs and Head teachers, to engage in SEND-related CPD and how they prioritise SEND-related issues.

In this context, '**Drivers**' are defined as a pressure on a school to seek out or identify SEND-related CPD. Drivers can come from within the school, such as from the senior leadership team, or externally as a result of change in government policy.

The survey explored: the general pressures on a school, who makes the decisions about SEND-related CPD activities, how different schools and school leadership teams, including Heads and Deputy Heads, SENCOs and teachers, differ with regards to the drivers for engagement with CPD activities and, as CPD evaluation can inform the need for future CPD sessions, we examined the evaluation of CPD activities within the school.

### 2.1 School Pressures

To set the broader scene we asked respondents what their most pressing issues were in school to see if SEND issues would feature. The data is prevalence data (and not frequency data).

The results are listed for the first three priorities across the regions:

1. Workload / lack of time: 17.19 % (153/890)
2. Funding: 10.82% (96/887)
3. Other workload issues: 9.18% (81/882)

No explicit reference to SEND-related CPD were made in any of the priority lists. However, aspects of working in relation to SEND issues were prioritised behind workload and funding and here the issues were related to: (a) Working / liaising / accessing other professionals / agencies / support / resources; (b) admin / paperwork / documentation / paperwork and deadlines / data and (c) Staffing / staff deployment.

### 2.2 SEND-related CPD decisions

Responses to our question on who makes the decisions regarding CPD provision showed that for the majority of the schools, decisions about SEND-related CPD are made by the SLT together with input from the SENCO. This finding might be related to the fact that SEND-related CPD is part of the School Development Plan, which is put together by the

SLT. Still, for a significant number of respondents (20%) the SENCO is not included in any decisions about CPD-related training. There were no differences between mainstream and special schools in relation to these findings.

- 58% (461/800) The Senior Leadership Team including the SENCO
- 20% (160/800) The Senior Leadership Team without the SENCO
- 6% (49/800) The SENCO alone
- 4% (34/800) The School staff through consultation
- 3% (21/800) We do not have SEND-related CPD.

## 2.3 Drivers to prioritise SEND issues

Responses to our question about the drivers to engage with CPD or to prioritise SEND issues, resulted in multiple answers and / or comments from individuals to each question (outside of the typical one person, one comment response). Therefore, the numbers we give reflect the *prevalence* of particular comment topics, which indicates the extent that a particular topic was mentioned as a total of all answers. We have focused on reporting comments linked to a minimum of the top 60% of responses. These include all the most prevalent answer topics for each answer across each survey.

Examining the comments (n= 1027) from staff about the drivers to prioritise SEND issues showed that two types of prioritisation were most prominent:

- Meeting the identified needs of children on a roll (36%: 370/1027)
- SEND CPD is part of a School Development Plan that needs to be actioned and delivered (35%: 359/1027)

The latter driver – as a theme – suggests schools prioritise SEND issues through School Development Plans, which includes meeting the needs of pupils through the training of teachers. Only 2% of the responses (22/1027) mentioned outcomes from a local area SEND Inspection and/or School Inspection as a driver for prioritising SEND CPD.

As the School Development Plan is developed by the school's leadership team, governors and/or trustees, as well as its staff, this suggests that control of the identification of what CPD should be done and when, should rest with the school. A tension might then exist between those who are part of the SLT and those who are supporting the needs of the pupils in the classroom. In order to further examine the differences in prioritisation of demands between those who are part of the SLT and those who are not, we examined the drivers for CPD per type of role.

### 2.3.1 Head and Deputy Head teachers

For Head teachers, there were 42 responses identified across all waves. Half of these responses (50%: 21/42) focused on the School Development Plan as a driver with 29% (12/42) saying SEND CPD was prioritised according to pupil needs. Noting the Head teacher's leadership role and management focus, it seems reasonable they would prioritise the School Development Plan in this way.

Compared to Head teachers, a larger number of Deputy Head teacher comments were made (n= 73). Deputy Head teachers followed the overall trend citing the needs of children on roll (49%: 36/73) and prioritising CPD via the School Development Plan (33%: 24/73) as key drivers for SEND CPD. Inclusion managers (75 responses) gave similar responses to those of Head teachers: 47% (35/75) of Inclusion manager answers focused on the School Development Plan and 33% (25/75) focused on the requirement to meet the needs of pupils as key drivers for SEND CPD.

### 2.3.2 SENCOs

In some schools SENCOs were members of school Senior Leadership Teams (SLT), in other schools they were not (see Chapter 6 for further details). We comment on SENCOs both as part of SLTs and where they are outside the SLT, including if they have a teaching role in addition to their SENCO role.

SENCOs echoed the Head teachers' responses. Out of 437 responses, 38% (165/437) focused on the School Development Plan as a key driver for SEND CPD and 37% (163/437) said it was driven by pupil needs. Some respondents labelled themselves as 'aspiring' SENCOs (41 comments). These were staff who wished to be SENCOs and were currently training to be SENCOs but did not have this as their main role. These respondents focused on the need to meet the needs of pupils (56%: 23/41) but 20% (8/41) said that SEND-related CPD was not a priority in their schools.

### 2.3.3 Teachers

For this study, teachers are defined as those who are school-based with a teaching timetable. They may be a subject lead or head of curriculum for subjects such as science or history. They may also have a pastoral or liaison role, in addition to their teaching role.

The comments from 'teachers' were subdivided into four groups: comments from classroom teachers (n= 101); from Learning Support Leads (n= 16); from Curriculum Leads (n= 13) and from Pastoral Tutors who had a classroom teaching role (n= 4). Among these groups, classroom teachers suggested meeting pupil needs was the main driver to prioritise SEND issues (45%: 45/101), as did Learning Support Leads (38%: 6/16) and Pastoral tutors (75%: 3/4). Curriculum leads, in contrast, focused on the School

Development Plan as the main driver. Responses from classroom teachers (35%: 35/101) and Learning Support Leads (25%: 4/16) suggested that the School Development Plan was a secondary driver from their perspective. Curriculum leads had meeting pupil needs as their secondary driver. From across the data we also had a small number of comments from TAs. The main drivers indicated by these respondents was meeting the identified needs of children (61%: 14/23).

## **2.4 Evaluation of CPD activities**

One important aspect to help plan for future SEND-related CPD activities is the evaluation of the impact of any SEND-related CPD activities that have been engaged with. We therefore asked respondents whether and how the impact of any SEND-related CPD training is assessed.

Out of the 636 responses related to CPD impact, 17% (107/636) did not assess the impact after a SEND CPD training. These included 103 mainstream and four special schools. However, 83% did assess the impact of the SEND-related CPD training.

Respondents' comments across surveys suggested that CPD, where it was evaluated, was generally evaluated by subsequent general observation of practitioners in the classroom after the training (30%: 190/636) or through evaluation by other methods (20%: 126/636), including surveys among staff measuring the impact of particular sessions on them and discussion. The type of evaluation of the CPD impact was the same for mainstream and special schools, although the frequency of each type slightly differed, with special schools relying more on other methods of evaluation than observation of colleagues.

There was little evidence of a systematic approach to this work or how it fed into the schools' subsequent CPD planning or identification of what was needed in the future. Equally, it was not clear how any CPD undertaken linked to a member of staff's career progression or larger professional development or how this related to a School Development Plan.

### **3. Facilitating factors and barriers relating to the demand for, and use of, particular SEND-related CPD training in the classroom**

This chapter analyses the barriers and facilitating factors, that may influence demand for, and use of, particular SEND CPD training as well as the actual implementation of the SEND CPD training in the classroom. Knowing what encouraged and / or discouraged the use of SEND-related resources, strategies and training among staff is important in order to understand which CPD resources would actually be implemented in the classroom.

For this chapter we explored: what encourages or discourages schools to use particular SEND-related resources, strategies and training.

#### **3.1 What prompts staff to engage with SEND-related resources, strategies and training?**

We first examined factors that encourage staff to engage with particular types of SEND-related resources, strategies and training in class.

##### **3.1.1 Facilitating factors for engagement with CPD**

When asked what helps staff to use a particular SEND-related training, comments (n =1222) were classified into six themes:

- Quick and easy to use (24%: 289/1222)
- Cost: free, reasonable, funds available (8%: 92/1222)
- Seeing it demonstrated, being trained to use it, experience of using it (7%: 90/1222)
- Availability of resource (6%: 67/1222)
- Evidence- or research-based (5%: 63/1222)
- Recommended, word of mouth (4%: 51/1222).

Although the same issues recur across respondent sources, the level of priority varied slightly. Within mainstream schools, the facilitating factors reported were about an activity's ease of use (main priority); its resource base and support; having training that included the practical use of the CPD approach / resource in practice as part of the training (in particular seeing it demonstrated and modelled); low costs and being evidence based. Responding MATs and research schools all prioritised the need for an evidence base for a particular CPD activity as a priority but also highlighted relevance, quick and easy use, personal

recommendations and seeing it demonstrated or modelled as facilitating drivers. However, there were only 10 responses in general from MATs and research schools combined.

For special schools specifically, 15 responses focused on seeing a strategy demonstrated and / or modelled (27%: 4/15); it being evidence- and research-based (27%: 4/15), and relevant to needs in the school (13%: 2/15).

### 3.1.2 Barriers for engagement with CPD

When asked about barriers to engaging with a particular resource, time, effectiveness, and cost were the main factors named by respondents (977 comments in total):

- Time: not enough time / no time to become familiar with it / no time to implement it / no time to do training / no time during timetable / too time consuming (17%: 165/977)
- Not effective (poor evidence / not proven or research based / no way of assessing impact) (17%: 165/977)
- Cost (16%: 158/977)
- Vague or difficult to use or understand, impractical, long winded (9%: 88/977)
- Irrelevant, not appropriate / not needed / doesn't meet needs (7%: 70/977)
- Staff not available for implementation or training / expertise not available / lots of staff needed (6%: 61/977)

However, again there were slight differences in priorities within these factors depending on the type of school, and special schools (n = 19) prioritised the lack of evidence base of the resource a slightly higher barrier:

- Not effective (poor evidence / not proven or research based / no way of assessing impact) (21%: 4/19)
- Irrelevant, not appropriate / not needed / doesn't meet needs (16%: 3/19)
- Time: not enough time / no time to become familiar with it / no time to implement it / no time to do training / during timetable / too time consuming (16%: 3/19)
- Cost (11%: 2/19)
- Vague or difficult to use or understand, impractical, long winded (11%: 2/19)
- Staff not available for implementation or training / expertise not available / lots of staff needed (5%: 1/19).

## **3.2 School leaders' influence on demand for and engagement with SEND-related CPD**

The School Leadership Team (SLT) and its Head teacher are critical to the learning activity and functioning of a school. Through the SLTs central role in developing, leading, and shaping a school's School Improvement / Development Plan and day-to-day running, the SLT also has potential to prioritise and identify CPD activity as part of its oversight of budgets and staff development. Through the SLT's responsibilities to provide the best possible learning environment within the school for all pupils, they have a central role in the updating of their staff's expertise in pedagogy, curriculum, pastoral and SEND-related aspects of their school-based work.

We asked what led SLT to engage with SEND-related CPD on behalf of their school and as leaders of the school community. This would formulate a context for what school staff might say were the factors that acted upon them in their prioritisation of SEND-related issues. We report SLT perspectives by mainstream and then special school type.

### **3.2.1 Academy mainstream schools**

We identified 298 comments from academy mainstream SLT members (these included Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and SENCOs as part of the SLT). The priorities to engage with CPD were:

- Relevance of the CPD / perception that it was needed (18%: 54/298)
- Cost: free/ reasonable / funds available (12%: 36/298)
- Time: when the courses are, how long they are, if time is available to take them, and time to put learning into place (10%: 30/298)
- Style of delivery (interesting, engaging, humour, not patronising or threatening, delivered at the right level): well taught using a variety of different teaching techniques including activities and examples (8%: 25/298)
- Other: not fitting into any categories (7%: 22/298)
- Recommended, word of mouth and positive reviews from other sources (5%:15/298)

### **3.2.2 Local Authority schools**

Responses (n = 363) for SLT members in Local Authority Mainstream Schools were very similar in emphasis but also mentioned the effectiveness of what was being trained for as a priority to engage with CPD:

- Relevance of the CPD / needed (19%: 69/363)

- Time: when the courses are, how long they are, if time is available to take them, time to put learning into place (10%: 35/363)
- Cost: free/ reasonable / funds available (9%: 33/363)
- Other: not fitting into any categories (9%: 32/363)
- Style of delivery (interesting, engaging, humour, not patronising or threatening, right level): well taught using a variety of different teaching techniques including activities and examples (7%: 24/363)
- Effective / shown to have an impact / results proven / can see how it would work in my school (6%: 20/363).

### 3.2.3 Independent schools

Thirty-seven responses were received from SLT members in independent schools and again relevance and timing of the course as well as costs were seen as main factors to engage with CPD:

- Relevant / needed (14%: 5/37)
- Time: when the courses are, how long they are, if time is available to take them, time to put learning into place (14%: 5/37)
- Cost: free/ reasonable / funds available (14%: 5/37)
- Other: not fitting into any categories (11%: 4/37)
- Style of delivery (interesting, engaging, humour, not patronising or threatening, right level): well taught / uses different teaching techniques including activities and examples (8%: 3/37).

### 3.2.4 Free schools

Comments (n=14) from Free school SLT members identified similar issues. However, a different order of priority was apparent. Although style of delivery was still the main priority to engage with CPD, effectiveness was a higher priority with some reference to good quality resources and links to personal expertise and interest compared to relevance and needs:

- Style of delivery (interesting, engaging, humour, not patronising or threatening, right level): well taught / uses different teaching techniques including activities and examples (21%: 3/14)
- Effective / shown to have an impact / results proven / can see how it would work in my school (14%: 2/14)

- Relevant / needed (14%: 2/14)
- Good resources used / given to participants to use and take away (7%: 1/14)
- Fits well with: personal interest / expertise / aspiration / information need (7%: 1/14).

### 3.2.5 Special schools

Special school SLT members (n= 38) prioritised many issues in common with colleagues in Academies and LA mainstream settings but with a different emphasis:

- Style of delivery (interesting, engaging, humour, not patronising or threatening, right level): well taught / uses different teaching techniques including activities and examples (24%: 9/38)
- Time: when the courses are, how long they are, if time is available to take them, time to put learning into place (16%: 6/38)
- Relevance / needed (11%: 4/38)
- Cost: free/ reasonable / funds available (8%: 3/38)
- Good resources used / given to participants to use and take away (5%: 2/38).

Special schools are likely to have greater existing expertise in SEND-related issues compared to mainstream settings and so might be expected to have a different CPD focus to mainstream settings. This may be because a special school focuses on particular types of needs in comparison to mainstream settings or the extent of a particular type of need rather than a need itself. This helps explain why, amongst special school staff, the data shows more emphasis on updating existing skills and knowledge rather than establishing initial skills and knowledge as in a mainstream setting.

Across the different types of schools, we see that SLT prioritised issues such as timing of the course, relevance and cost to engage with SEND-related CPD. Only for free schools and special schools was the style of delivery of the CPD course a main priority.

## 3.3 What prompts staff to implement CPD training within the classroom

We asked respondents about the factors that encourage or discourage them from applying SEND related training to practice. We report these per type of role as different types of roles may have different CPD priorities and experience different demands. For example, senior leaders contribute to decisions on budgets and CPD training events and can thus directly fund what they identify as a priority, whereas staff outside the SLT cannot.

### 3.3.1 Barriers to implementation in the classroom

#### School leaders (excluding SENCOs)

From 69 responses from school leaders (excluding SENCOs) *time* in various aspects was the overwhelming issue. Relevance and effectiveness of the CPD were also mentioned, as was its ease of implementation. Little or no reference to evaluation was made:

- Time: not enough time / no time to become familiar with it / no time to implement it during timetable / too time consuming (26%: 18/69)
- Relevance: not relevant / not appropriate / not needed / doesn't meet needs (13%: 9/69)
- Evidence: not effective / poor evidence / not proven or research based / no way of assessing impact (9%: 6/69)
- Resources: not available or provided or too many needed or to be prepared, poor quality, too much paperwork required (7%: 5/69)
- Implementation problems: vague or difficult to use or understand, impractical, long winded to implement (7%: 5/69).

#### SENCOs

Among SENCO responses (n = 488), time was again a priority but also cost was reported, as was having too many priorities to manage effectively. The emphasis changed, however, in that support from staff (and so engagement by staff in the need for the training in question) became an issue. This was linked to a perceived lack of leadership by the SLT as a contributing factor to staff non-engagement in SEND-related training:

- Time: not enough time / no time to become familiar with it / not time to implement it during timetable / too time consuming (28%: 138/488)
- Cost (10%: 48/488)
- Lack of support, advice and collaboration from others: staff / LA etc. / staff not buying-in or engaging / staff attitudes (10%: 47/488)
- Relevance: not relevant / not appropriate / not needed / doesn't meet needs (9%: 45/488)
- Too many other priorities (5.9%: 29/488).

#### Classroom teachers

Classroom teachers (69 responses) focused on time and cost and to a lesser extent relevance:

- Time: not enough time / no time to become familiar with it / not time to implement it during timetable / too time consuming (38%: 26/69)

- Cost (15%: 10/69)
- Relevance: not relevant / not appropriate / not needed / doesn't meet needs (10%: 7/69).

Overall, the three different types of practitioner: School Leaders, SENCOs and classroom teachers placed a common emphasis on time as a barrier to demand for SEND CPD and to a lesser extent, relevance. For both SENCOs and classroom teachers, cost also was mentioned. However, it is interesting to see that cost was not a main barrier for SLT.

### **3.3.2 Facilitating factors for implementation in the classroom**

When asked about what factors encourage the implementation of CPD training, having the time to reflect upon and implement a new CPD acquired strategy or approach as well as having the support of other staff, were both key factors. The effectiveness of the CPD experience, its ease and quickness of access and the opportunities to try the approach out, often linked to modelling in practice, supported by good resources, formed the basis of most comments. As there were no differences between mainstream and special schools, we report these together:

- Time: enough time to implement, reflect (13%: 80/620)
- Support from other staff / SLT / good attitude from staff / knowledgeable supportive staff (13%: 82/620)
- Effective and enjoyable / seeing the impact / knowing it works /able to check impact (9%: 57/620)
- Easy and quick to implement with clear information/ practical help / useful strategies / easy to understand and learn (8%: 51/620)
- Opportunities to try it out / discuss / observe / follow it up (7%: 42/620)
- Resources: good resources / resources available / adaptable for variety of needs (7%: 40/620)
- Other (6%: 39/620).

## 4. The supply of SEND-related CPD in England

This chapter analyses the supply of SEND-related CPD, including how schools and staff hear about SEND-related CPD opportunities and courses and whether the kind of provision being accessed is delivered through internal sources, LA sources or external providers, when it is delivered, and any gaps related to available SEND CPD. In addition, we examine the use of school networks, whether schools join local networks to address training needs and how such networks are identified and maintained. Comparisons between the different types of schools are made.

### 4.1 SEND-related CPD opportunities

We asked respondents directly: *'How do you get to know about possible SEND-related training / CPD in your school?'* We identified 849 answers, which we summarise in five themes:

- Information from emails including general and non-SEND-specific newsletters, or advertising general CPD (19%: 162/849)
- Information from LAs (18%: 154/849)
- Information from the web or social media (14%: 117/849)
- Information from non-LA commercial provision or third sector organisations or universities (6%: 50/849)
- Information from within the setting, specifically from other staff (6%: 49/849).

The majority of responses indicated that people receive their information from three sources. First, from general email advertising. Second, from their LA, including specialist SEND / general newsletters, LA bulletins and specific service information. Third, from social media and other web resources. A smaller proportion obtained information about possible SEND-related training via word of mouth within a setting and from commercial sources.

Very little reference was made to accessing CPD information from SEND-related websites or directories (e.g. SEND Getaway) for particular needs. A range of reasons were given for this which included: poor access to broadband at home or out of school hours, limited time to do the searching and collating of information, perceived non-compatibility of web-based information being formatted to display on computers or tablets rather on phones.

Out of 849 responses, MATs and individual Academies produced 264 comments in relation to sources of CPD:

- Information from email including general non-SEND specific newsletters, or general CPD newsletters (20%: 54/264)
- Information from LA provision (15%: 39/264)
- Information from the web and social media (14%: 38/264)
- Information from professional associations, or specialist staff including other SENCOs (7%: 18/264)
- Information from within settings, including senior staff but excluding-SENCOs (6%: 15/264).

It is noteworthy that Academies and MATs still get a significant amount of information about CPD opportunities from LAs. In addition, MATs also use information from professional associations and senior staff. This may be because schools in a MAT have an inbuilt network within which sources of information may be shared. Given the management structures of some MATs, including the roles of Executive Heads, senior leaders being a source of information linked to demands and drivers for CPD may not be surprising.

Special schools contributed 23 out of the 849 responses. These responses reflected a different emphasis. As in mainstream settings, information about SEND-related training opportunities was mainly provided by LA sources and to a small extent also via general emails. However, a small proportion of responses (13%) suggested they used their own expertise within settings for CPD purposes, consistent with their status as specialist SEND settings.

- Information from LAs (26%: 6/23)
- Setting provides / leads CPD training / promotes it (13%: 3/23)
- Information from within settings / other setting staff (13%: 3/23)
- Information via emails about general non-SEND-specified newsletters, or general CPD (9%: 2/23).

Special schools necessarily already have existing high levels of expertise. This may be about SEND in general or, if it is a need-specific setting, about particular need(s). With their existing expertise, additional CPD expertise tended to be accessed from outside of their own setting as a top-up for existing expertise rather than to develop new expertise – in this case from the LA or from other special schools. Special schools are often also providers of CPD to other schools – both mainstream and special. Like other mainstream schools, however, they gather their information about CPD opportunities from newsletters (including word of mouth).

These points identify how staff and schools come to know of SEND-related CPD opportunities in terms of what is available. However, the data here does not provide any insight into whether staff explicitly searched for any CPD opportunities themselves and, if

so, how or what sources they used to identify these opportunities. In addition, it is unclear if there are any barriers to staff looking for CPD opportunities.

The data also provides no insight into the quality of the opportunities advertised via these sources. Our research did not explore whether staff focus on research-informed CPD opportunities and whether they prefer CPD opportunities to be advertised via a particular source.

A further note is that the survey did not ask about CPD opportunities that may arise from a funding offer from an LA, within a MAT or as part of a wider initiative such as a DfE funded project. These are just some of the ways schools can identify and plan for their SEND-related CPD needs. Importantly, these CPD opportunities may at different times only be available to a specific school or include a network of schools, of varying size. Furthermore, these SEND-related CPD opportunities may be offered in a single phase (e.g. for a primary school) or across multiple phases involving a primary and secondary schools, for example. Equally, a CPD opportunity may arise focused on a specific role – for example, Inclusion managers, SENCOs or speech, language and communication leads in a school. Alternatively, the SEND-related CPD opportunity may occur as a result of a partnership between a mainstream and a special school.

## 4.2 Providers of SEND-related CPD

Respondents (n = 686) were also asked who provides their SEND-related CPD:

- 79% (542/686) said that SENCO provides SEND CPD. These respondents included 46% LA mainstream responses (251/542) and 37% from academy mainstream schools (201/542). 4% LA special school responses (19/542) and 1% from academy special schools (7/542).
- 43% (297/686) said that Local Authority provides SEND CPD. These respondents included 53% LA mainstream responses (158/297) and 38% from academy mainstream schools (113/297).
- 19% (134/686) said that a school team (either from within own school or another school) provides SEND CPD. These respondents included 38% LA mainstream responses (51/134) and 33% from academy mainstream schools (44/134). 15% LA special school responses (20/134) and 7% from academy special schools (10/134).
- 18% (124/686) said that a commercial organisation provides SEND CPD. These respondents included 40% LA mainstream responses (50/124) and 36% from academy mainstream schools (45/124). 9% LA special school responses (11/124) and 2% from academy special schools (2/124)
- 14% (93/686) said that a charity / third sector provider provides SEND CPD. These respondents included 48% LA mainstream responses (45/93), 33% from academy

mainstream schools (31/93), 4% LA special school responses (4/93) and 2% from academy special schools (2/93).

The majority of SEND-related CPD, for all types of schools, across phases, was mainly delivered by SENCOs as well as LAs or LA linked services. It is interesting to see that Academies and MATs still get a significant amount of their CPD from LAs rather than from commercial sources. Overall, provision from commercial suppliers of CPD was low as this was seen as expensive. However, as funding was withdrawn from LAs new providers were set up under 'traded services' agreements. These traded services are limited companies that are solely owned by the LAs. It is currently unclear whether respondents are aware of this model and refer to these traded services as LA provision or as commercial providers or both.

### 4.3 Schools joining networks

We also explored whether schools use local networks to address training needs, both for the identification of those needs and the provision of SEND-related CPD. We asked respondents '*Who else does your service/school work with to support SEND CPD training?*'

Local school networks can include a variety of exchange relationships, including between different types of school (i.e. mainstream–mainstream schools; mainstream–special schools or special–special schools) and different school phases (i.e. primary–secondary; secondary–secondary; primary–primary) and these schools may be non-teaching or research schools as well as teaching schools. In addition, these networks may be formal or informal (e.g. as a result of discussions between the SENCO of a secondary school and the SENCOs of its related partner primary schools).

For mainstream schools (1122 responses) the main themes were; working with other mainstream schools in a network; working with special schools; sharing practice and doing joint CPD:

- Work with mainstream schools in your area in a network (25%: 282/1122)
- Work with special schools in your area in a network (17%: 189/1122)
- Share SEND practice / resources with other schools in a network (17%: 185/1122)
- Do joint CPD training in other schools (12%: 130/1122).

These four themes account for 71% (786/1122) of responses – and reflect the different possible ways schools can interact with other schools.

For special schools, responses (n = 98) fell into three main themes:

- Work with other special schools in your area in a network (25%: 24/98)

- Work with mainstream schools in your area in a network (21%: 21/98)
- Do joint CPD training in other schools (14%: 14/98)

Both types of setting, mainstream and special, network within their own type of school and across school settings. However, these results arise from staff in school who may not be aware of what networking is taking place in their school, beyond that which they are involved in themselves. Therefore, the true number of schools working together for CPD provision and training may be higher.

When asked to explicitly list any local links or regional networks, 19% of responses from staff in mainstream and special schools (156/817) responded that their school did not form networks with other schools. Among these 156 responses, 47% (73/156) were LA mainstream schools, 37% (58/156) were MATs. Only 6% of these 156 responses came from special schools (10/156). These responses did not specify what types of networks are lacking or which the schools in question did not form. Again, this has to be viewed in the light of these responses being individual perspectives from individual staff members. As a result, these levels of reporting may represent an under-reporting of actual networking between schools.

For those who did list networks, respondents' comments suggested schools were engaging with a wide range of networks of varying size, locality and focus. These ranged from those that were linked with adjacent, partner or feeder schools (e.g. between primary schools and secondary schools) and between mainstream schools and nearby special schools. Links were also apparent between LA-linked schools and MATs, as were links between non-teaching schools and teaching schools (often as part of placement opportunities in both directions) and similarly with research schools.

Networks included school-based linkages; particular role linkages (e.g. Head teachers' groups; SENCO groups); school type linkages; geographical and catchment area linkages. Some indicated regional linkages or specific project linkages involving both teaching, non-teaching and Research Schools across mainstream and special settings. National networks, such as SENCO forum and nasen, were referred to but were less commented upon.

The data showed a complex pattern of different types of relationships. Less apparent was how schools logged and maintained these relationships (apart from continuing to engage in a particular relationship or network over time). Many of the links reported were informal and at a personal level. This raises the question of their sustainability if a particular member of staff retires or changes schools. A consequential loss of contact and linkage might result. There was little indication of succession planning or handing on of contacts and network information formally in survey responses. This does not rule out informal handover and succession planning.

## 4.4 Availability and timing of CPD provision

When asked about when CPD sessions took place, school staff's responses were consistent across the regions in both the surveys and our follow-up interviews. Approximately 10% of respondents reported no SEND-related training in their school in the past academic year that they had been engaged in or were aware of having happened (113/1072). These were all mainstream schools. All of the remaining 90% schools, including all of the responding special schools, had engaged in at least one SEND-related CPD training session during the past year. They reported that the overwhelming majority of training that did take place was on the school site.

The training involved was mostly done during after school (3–6 pm) twilight sessions (57%: 615/1072), which were usually between 1–2 hours in duration. Statutory training days were also used for SEND-related CPD linked to the school development plan, often for whole school rather than individual teacher-specific work (52%: 562/1072). Linked to this, staff and SENCOs reported that they were seldom released from school for out of school CPD / training (a variety of reasons were offered including: keeping costs down, having minimal impact on staff workload, and minimising missed learning for pupils). Where they were released, out of school training was usually local and in relative proximity to their school.

## 4.5 Gaps in SEND-related CPD

A fifth of those respondents who answered the question (20%:194/943) identified specific gaps in SEND-related CPD. These were most commonly reported to be related to sensory impairment needs (5% of the gaps identified), physical disability (6%), and working with children with autism (13%). In addition, social and mental health related issues were also highlighted (8% and 11% respectively).

This desire for CPD to support working with diverse pupil needs also included:

- supporting attachment disorders and challenging behaviours among those with identified SEND needs
- supporting high achievers/ gifted learners, including those with autistic needs
- understanding and developing expertise in how co-occurrence of needs can be addressed in the classroom
- need profiles rather than focusing on primary need categories and identifying and addressing abuse and bullying issues for those with SEND.

Other gaps in CPD were around working with professionals coming from outside school to support staff and / or pupils. The following were identified as gaps:

- Access to and working with Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech and Language Therapists, and more generally those from health and social care services.
- Access to and working with Sensory Impairment Specialists (across need types) and Habilitation Specialists / Assistants.
- Awareness of what such professionals can offer
- Awareness about what kind of training would be available (including identification of needs) with regards to working with particular professionals in relation to particular pupils.

However, the fact that gaps were only mentioned in terms of access to these professionals and understanding of what these professionals offer, instead of receiving CPD from these professionals in terms of how to support children with these needs can be inferred as an additional gap.

Another group of responses focused, across the surveys and interviews, on having opportunities to liaise with and gain experience of, special schools and other settings (e.g. PRUs and Alternative Provision). This did not mean specific CPD but rather facilitating such access to other settings, which might then lead to the identification of a need for more specific CPD. It might be thought that teachers would have access to such contacts informally through existing school-to-school networks but this appeared to be little mentioned among school staff, perhaps signalling another gap in potential support if not CPD. Teachers / SENCOs reported having limited access to, or awareness of, national and local networks for general SEND issues and need-specific groups to network with and to form formal and informal partnerships with.

Generally, there was a positive view of working with mainstream schools if in a special school (and vice versa) but actual partnering could be frustrating due to lack of time out of school, travel costs, and access. In addition, special schools are often all age, in contrast to mainstream, which are often based on phases. The need to match exchange opportunities via the age group (and developmental age) of the pupils, *rather than* by the mainstream phase they are organised into was noted, as was the particular difficulty for teaching / training placements for school-based training.

## 5. The low incidence needs specialist workforce

Chapters 2–4 have focused on the views of staff in school around their engagement with SEND-related CPD in their schools. In this chapter, we look at the views of those professionals, from diverse professional contexts (specialist sensory impairment services, third sector providers etc.), outside of school who nonetheless work directly *in* schools, in many instances linked to SEND-related CPD activity.

In Chapter 4 we explored whether there were gaps in SEND CPD provision. Two main areas of professional services were identified relating to low incidence need: sensory impairment and physical disability. In relation to both sensory impairment and physical disability, professionals are often service based – either provided as part of ‘free’ services to LA schools that are controlled by LAs themselves (mainstream or special); or ‘traded’ as a bought in service from a third sector organisation (‘free’ or on a contracted basis) or from a consultancy on a commercial basis.

Specialists who teach classes of children who have vision, hearing or multi-sensory impairments are required to have a mandatory sensory impairment qualification, in addition to qualified teacher status. Practitioners who specialise in physical disability aspects of SEND-related support have no mandatory formal qualifications, no clear progression routes or even consistent professional role names. Nonetheless, working through the Physical Disability Network (pdnet) we have contacted a range of practitioners in this area.

We asked sensory impairment professionals and physical disability specialists how schools respond to low incidence needs in relation to SEND-related training and how they prioritise engagement with SEND-related training. Specifically, we examined whether there is a gap in the supply of professional services in relation to CPD training in these areas. In the second instance, we explored the support available from specialist services for children with sensory impairments and those with physical disabilities, including who and how frequently they advise in schools, whether they work with other networks, and what barriers and facilitators they have identified in implementing sensory impairment CPD and physical disability CPD in the classroom.

### 5.1 Low incidence needs and CPD training

For the purposes of this document the term relates to conditions recorded with a prevalence of less than 4% of pupils recorded with SEN.

#### 5.1.1 Prioritising engagement with CPD training

Specialist teachers for children and young people with sensory impairment gave a similar pattern of answers to those discussed in section 2.3, focusing on School Development

Plans as the main **driver** for demand for their support (65%: 15/23). They also mentioned children's identified needs as a secondary driver, whereas local area SEND inspections featured less amongst this group.

Specialist staff supporting those with physical disabilities identified the School Development Plan as the main **driver** for demand for their support (34%: 28/83) with the identified needs of the child as a secondary driver (31%: 26/83).

### 5.1.2 Gaps in CPD training opportunities

Among sensory impairment professionals (64 responses – via NatSIP) 80% (51/64) did not identify a lack of CPD opportunities for schools as an issue. Among the Physical Disability Network (pdnet) professionals survey, 61% (48/79) thought there was no gap in CPD opportunities for schools. Professionals engaged in providing CPD in sensory impairment and physical disability instead focused on the difficulties of:

- getting into schools;
- accessing staff time for training; and
- engaging SLT members in such training as a priority.

Those that did mention a gap in provision frequently mentioned mental health and medical needs of children with sensory impairment and physical disability as areas where further CPD training is required.

The difference in views between schools and external professionals is noteworthy: schools identify two elements of low incidence needs – sensory impairment and physical disability – as being a gap in their CPD; in contrast, professionals say there are no gaps in the availability of CPD, rather issues of access, time for training and engaging SLT members in such training as a priority. This could mean that staff have identified a low incidence CPD need but are unable to access it, or that where a need is identified, there is a perceived gap in resources available. Our data does not allow us to differentiate between these two possibilities. However, if, as the professionals' data suggests, engaging SLT members in the need for CPD in these areas is an issue, perhaps the lack of prioritisation by SLTs results in a lack of CPD opportunities in schools, as discussed in chapter 2.

Professionals in both sensory impairment and physical disability contexts noted that the CPD demands in their areas of need, when access was possible, were generally focused on raising staff awareness of sensory impairment and their implications and similarly for physical disability. However, a lack of specialists who have in-depth knowledge of how children can be supported in the classroom was mentioned as a gap in relation to CPD provision by professionals working with sensory impairment and physical disability. With this in mind, we examine in the next two sections the qualifications of the sensory

impairment and physical disability specialists as well as their CPD training experience and their views on barriers and facilitators in the implementation of CPD in the classroom.

## 5.2 Sensory impairment professionals' views

Fourteen respondents (18%: 14/78) did not have any formal qualifications relating to sensory impairment<sup>2</sup>. In addition, a number of the sensory impairment professionals had a range of qualifications with a focus on SEND and sensory impairment in general and some had multiple qualifications:

- Qualified Teacher of Vision Impaired: 19% (21/113)
- Qualified Teacher of Hearing Impaired: 24% (27/113)
- Qualified Teacher of Multi-Sensory Impairments: 12% (14/113)
- Educational Audiologist: 5% (6/113)
- Qualified Habilitation Specialist: 0.8% (1/113)
- NASENCO qualification: 0.8% (1/113)
- PGCert linked to Special Needs / Disability / Inclusion: 8% (10/113)
- Masters in a Special Needs / Disability / Inclusion focused area: 13% (15/113)
- PhD / DEd in a Special Needs / Disability / Inclusion focused area: 3% (3/113)
- Any Need specific / Disability qualifications not listed: 10% (11/113).

However, of the survey respondents only 13.2% (n= 14) said that their training covered all that was needed. Those who identified gaps in the specialist training (32/43) mentioned that the course did not include enough information about how to support children with SEND in the classroom or that the course focused too little on SEND in general. In addition, some respondents also mentioned that they took their degree a long time ago and that demands and curricula had changed considerably since their training. Still, 90% of respondents said that they work with other networks to support children and young people with needs arising from their sensory impairment across education, health and social care.

Most sensory impairment professionals reported that they provide a number of CPD sessions per year (93%: 65/70), with only 7% of sensory impairment professionals not having provided any CPD during the last working year. Although many of the sensory

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<sup>2</sup> This is in contrast with The CRIDE survey which found that only 1% of professionals did not have the required qualifications. The difference in the current sample might relate to the small sample size.

impairment professionals regularly provide CPD sessions, 42% (32/77) stated that they had no training on delivering CPD sessions during their career or training so far.

When asked about the implementation of CPD within settings, sensory impairment professionals' top facilitating factors for schools engaging with CPD included support from other staff and SLT (18.8%) as well as monitoring and review of the CPD activity (14.5%), whilst not enough time to either become familiar with or implement the CPD training was seen as the biggest barrier (35.4%), in addition to cost (12.7%) and the fact that they have too many other priorities (12.7%).

### 5.3 Physical disability specialists

Although the physical disability specialists had a number of qualifications that included a focus on SEND and or inclusion, 17 respondents (24%: 17/70) had no relevant qualifications in the area of the expert role they fulfil on a daily basis. As before, the data reported below is prevalence data as respondents could tick more than one qualification:

- NASENCO qualification: 19% (16/84)
- PGCert linked to Special Needs / Disability / Inclusion: 19% (16/84)
- Masters in a Special Needs / Disability / Inclusion focused area: 15% (13/84)
- PhD / DEd in a Special Needs / Disability / Inclusion focused area: 2% (2/84)
- Any Need specific / Disability qualifications not listed: 12% (10/84).

Most physical disability specialists obtained their training through full time undergraduate (45%: 33/72) and postgraduate degrees (36%: 26/72) at a higher education institute, with only a minority coming through the initial teacher training route (11%: 8/72). Similar to the sensory impairment specialists, only 22% (16/72) agreed that their course included everything they needed to fulfil their role successfully and 79% (44/56) argued that their course did not include enough about SEND and how to support children with SEND in the classroom. Most of the physical disability specialists 91% (75/82) work with other networks and organisations to support children with physical disability across education, health, and social care.

Although 87% of the physical disability specialists had provided CPD on at least one occasion during the last work year, 43% of them, (37/70) stated that they had no training in delivering CPD sessions during their career or training so far.

Similar to other external professional groups, support from other staff and SLT was the main facilitator for the implementation of CPD training in the classroom (24.1%), followed

by the quality of the CPD training (10.1%). Again, time to become familiar with the training as well as to implement it was the main barrier to CPD implementation (24.3%).

## 6. SENCOs as part of the specialist SEND workforce

All school staff have a role in supporting children and young people with SEND. However, the SENCO has a particular and specific remit as a specialist in this context and their specific responsibilities can be classified into four main categories. The first responsibility links to the identification, support, maintenance, monitoring, evaluation and review of a pupil's learning needs through the processes of having potential additional needs identified, addressed and supported, including work to support the parents / carers of the pupil.

Second, the SENCOs role is key as part of a school's response to pupils' needs: it also informs the level of a pupil's needs, once identified, from those that can be addressed through a school's universal provision to that of targeted provision (linked to the category of 'SEN Support' – to be discussed later) and, where even more specific support is required, those on Education, Health and Care plans (EHC plans, formerly 'Statements of SEN', discussed later).

Third, SENCOs also have a role within schools to support other staff and Senior leaders (if they are not themselves a member of the SLT). SENCOs work closely with classroom teachers as SEND issues advisors and to support classroom teachers' management of teaching assistants (TAs) who may support particular pupils or groups of pupils in a teacher's classroom. In an advisory and support role, SENCOs also work with curriculum and pastoral leads, families, and school governors or trustees.

Finally, SENCOs have a key role in relation to liaison with external agencies and services around SEND-related issues affecting pupils in their school, whether through the LA, through a MAT or via external services and professionals across education, health and care.

Overall, SENCOs have both inward facing (i.e. within the school, its staff, pupils and parents / carers) and an outward facing role (i.e. working with outside services and agencies and the LA for SEN support and EHC plan purposes).

SENCOs, like other school staff, may have more than one formal role. We will present data to show that having more than one role is particularly likely in primary schools compared to larger staffed secondary schools. Engagement with SEND-related CPD for SENCOs, and other staff more widely, may also need to take account of CPD for their other roles. Prioritising which CPD to have in relation to which role at a particular point adds a further layer of complexity for staff in their engagement with the various forms of CPD they need for their different roles. The decision of which CPD to undertake, and when, may not be an individual staff member's but may be driven by wider school priorities.

In terms of SEND-related CPD, on the basis of the four areas of activity above, SENCOs are potentially pivotal in identifying, advising on, managing, leading, reviewing and evaluating such provision for school-based staff. SENCOs have a responsibility to identify their own SEND-related CPD needs to maintain their expertise and capacity to support others. SENCOs are well-placed because of their roles and day-to-day work and networking / connections to support the advising of colleagues and the identification of SEND-related CPD needs and priorities within their schools, SLT, and their teaching and staff colleagues. Their work should thus directly inform the managing and planning of their school for SEND-related issues as they develop from pupil intake to pupil intake. As a consequence of this view of the SENCOs' roles, they have formed a main focus for this report, which has also sought the views of SLT, classroom staff within schools, and those engaging with them from outside schools.

This chapter focuses on the SENCO as a member of the specialist workforce, with the aim of evaluating the role of the SENCO within decisions made about SEND CPD provision. As part of our data gathering, we also asked SENCOs about their CPD training skills.

## **6.1 Current and aspiring SENCOs**

On average, the SENCOs in our survey had been in this role for 11.52 years (range 0–28 years) with most having three or more years of experience. A fraction of these SENCOs did not have a teaching qualification (6%: 41/685). Most of those who had a teaching qualification had obtained this through HE institutions (66%: 453/685); 10% (71/685) qualified via ITT route, and 4.5% (31/685) via apprenticeships. However, 63.36% (434/685) had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

We also explored the number of SENCOs who were no longer in a SENCO role and the reasons why. Out of 685 responses, 4.82% (n = 33) identified that they were no longer a SENCO. There were a number of reasons for leaving the role of a SENCO and whilst some reported issues with workload pressure and issues related to fulfilling the role, most prevalent reasons included the fact that they had been promoted to a more senior or specialist role, such as the Head teacher or sensory impairment specialist.

## **6.2 SENCO roles within a school**

This section explores aspects of the SENCO role itself, especially the type of roles in a school a SENCO may fulfill. SENCOs in different types of school would be very likely to have other roles in the school and not all SENCOs work full time as SENCOs. Given the key status of the SENCO role across school types and within particular schools, having multiple roles may create tensions around which aspects of the role should be addressed as a priority in CPD terms.

SENCOs were part of the SLT in about 44.5% (305/685) of all responses received across England. This means that only some are able to directly contribute to the decision making related to the school, including any CPD related decisions. However, there were differences related to school phase types, with 54.70% (233/426) of SENCOs in primary schools being part of their SLT in contrast to 19.10% (34/178) of those in secondary schools, while in all-age schools (which are often special schools) 42.59% (23/54) of SENCOs were part of their SLTs. The larger number in primary schools may reflect the fact that primary schools are generally smaller and have fewer staff and so for the same number of basic roles within school, each person has to take on more roles. The reverse would be the case in secondary schools. However, this may mean that SENCOs in secondary schools have less direct input on SEND-related CPD planning and priorities.

We examined the number of people who said that being a SENCO was not their primary role in school. Many SENCOs (75%: 515/685) had a role in addition to being a SENCO (they might be a teacher in their secondary role). The breakdown among primary and all age schools followed a similar pattern to the breakdown for membership of the SLT. Across the data 34% (145/426) of SENCOs in primary schools had the SENCO role as a secondary role, whereas only 9% (16/178) of SENCOs in secondary schools were in this position, and all of these secondary school SENCOs were in all age schools. Importantly, out of those that said that SENCO was their secondary role, 31% (55/175) reported being a class teacher as their primary role. In addition, 7% (12/175) said they were a Head teacher as well as a SENCO. Most of those who reported being a class teacher as their primary role as well as being a SENCO in a second role included primary school teachers (91%: 50/55). This research did not explore whether this means that they have less time for their SENCO role compared to those for whom being a SENCO is their only role and / or whether this mostly applies to schools that are relatively small in terms of number of SEND children on their roll.

In relation to CPD, these figures suggest that many of those in the SENCO role have other roles, which may mean a tension around the extent that they have time to engage with SEND-related CPD themselves, as specialists in SEND, in each school setting. As they are for the most part the main source of CPD expertise in their schools for other staff, this may be a significant issue for their settings and school staff.

### **6.3 SENCO qualifications**

Any SENCO appointed to the role after 1 September 2009, and who has not previously been the SENCO at that or any other relevant school for a total period of more than twelve months, is required to achieve the National Award in SEN coordination (NASENCO) within three years of starting their post.

Across the different regions, 53% of SENCOs (365/685) had the NASENCO qualification or are currently studying towards the NASENCO qualification. There were no differences for primary or secondary schools. However, of those who did not have SENCO qualifications only 20% (64/320) said they did not need any as they were not new to post. Therefore, 29% of staff responding to the survey (93/320) who are currently fulfilling the role of SENCO do not have the NASENCO training and are not working towards such a qualification. It is currently unclear in which schools SENCOs currently do not have the NASENCO award and whether these schools rotate the SENCO role.

From our data it seemed that new teachers had about 4–5 years of teaching experience before embarking on the NASENCO or other mandatory training route (e.g. to be a QTVI) and there was little evidence that staff had experienced any systematic progression preparation for such career development.

As we have seen in section 4.2 of this report, SENCOs provide the majority of the CPD; 38% of survey responses (262/685) suggested that SENCOs had little prior training in CPD, planning, delivery, review or evaluation in either their initial teacher training or subsequent training. Where SENCOs had prior experience, it was gleaned from on-the-job learning, especially from experience and feedback from sessions they had run. There was little indication of any systematic accumulation and review of skills linked to their CPD role as CPD leads or providers within schools or to other schools, and this did not differ between those who had a NASENCO qualification and those who did not.

## **7. Mandatory qualifications for SENCOs**

As previously stated, any SENCO appointed to the role after 1 September 2009, and who has not previously been the SENCO at that or any other relevant school for a total period of more than twelve months, is required to achieve the NASENCO within three years of starting their post. The findings in the previous chapter show that many NASENCO holders report that they did not have enough training in CPD planning, or the delivery and evaluation of CPD activities. The current chapter focuses on how those with mandatory qualifications engage with SEND CPD as well as how the NASENCO qualification could be enhanced.

### **7.1 The impact of mandatory qualifications**

We evaluated whether having a mandatory qualification (NASENCO) would make a difference to the way SENCOs would engage with SEND-related CPD or how they would assess the impact of the CPD.

There was little difference in how SENCOs with or without the NASENCO engaged with SEND CPD: 90.7% (331/ 365) of those who had the NASENCO had provided at least one SEND CPD session within the past year versus 85.6% (274/320) of those who did not hold the NASENCO.

In addition, there were no differences in the reasons why respondents engaged with particular SEND training activities or CPD. Relevance of the activity in relation to the children on the roll, cost of the training, and timing of the course (duration and timing of the event) were the top three reasons for both those who currently have the NASENCO and those who do not.

Finally, there was little difference between those who have the NASENCO and those who currently do not for how they assess the impact for SEND CPD. In both groups CPD was mainly assessed through observation and evaluation and a similar number of cases did not assess CPD impact: 16.2% of those with the NASENCO (59/365) did not assess CPD impact compared to 13.5% of those who do not (43/320).

### **7.2 Updating the current NASENCO**

We also gathered data across our surveys (n = 319) around the question of how the existing NASENCO could be developed and extended. This has been linked to an existing review of the NASENCO course structure, content and learning outcomes being undertaken by the NASENCO providers as part of the Whole School SEND programme of

work.<sup>3</sup> We have already highlighted a lack of SENCOs being prepared for their role as providers and leaders of SEND-related CPD in their schools.

Many of the responses linked to how the NASENCO could be developed further were very detailed and specific and covered topics, resources, the pedagogic approaches of the courses, assessments etc. The most prevalent comments fell into four broad themes:

**Expertise development and practice-based work in COP related work (working within the Code of Practice, 2015):** included in this category were the following types of comments: *Knowledge, understanding of COP (2015), implications and legal responsibilities of roles; Legal responsibilities of other roles in relation to the person's role: accountability; processes; time lines; stages; EHC plan applications; EHC plan writing and management; provision mapping; review and appeal processes; understanding relationships between four areas of need in COP and primary need identification and interpretation especially in relation to EHC plan creation; GDPR in relation to confidentiality and COP systems.*

**Developing the SENCO role: personal organisation and skills:** included in this category were the following types of comments: *Time management; curriculum development; communications; personal wellbeing; personal resilience; problem solving strategies and practice; people management skills and strategies; negotiating strategies; prioritising; goal setting/target setting across timescales; developing a SENCO calendar; day-to-day management; managing workload / working with assistant SENCOs; working across schools as an executive SENCO; maintaining records / paperwork; transition planning and management.*

**Developing SEND-workforce training specialist routes:** included in this category were the following types of comments: *The use of more diverse training delivery strategies / approach / teaching styles / assessment styles strategies; face-to-face support/ online support / video-based support / teaching / training; access to training within / across regions / areas / providers; patterns of practicums / enrichment activities; more focus on practice than theory / strategies emphasis and critiquing of strategies; update routes during and after specific training / CPD requirements and further progression routes.*

**Developing the role of a SENCO and its expectations:** included in this category were the following types of comments: *Managing school expectations; working with SLT / and*

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<sup>3</sup> The NASENCO Providers Partnership: Leading Learning for Special Educational Needs and Disability C.i.C.

as an SLT member; scheduling and inputs into school timetables / other timetables; inputs to CPD planning; leadership activities.

Sensory impairment professionals (n = 52) also provided some suggestions for extending the NASENCO training. Respondents were generally professionals who held mandatory qualifications in one of the sensory impairment areas; vision specific, hearing specific and / or multi-sensory needs and so made points from this perspective. Respondents could include more than one suggestion and thus we report the top three most common responses:

- 1) Expertise development through practice-based opportunities in sensory impairment;
- 2) Expertise development and practice-based opportunities in relation to COP and
- 3) Role (SENCO) in high quality teaching.

For physical disability professionals (n = 53), the same themes featured within the responses to improve the NASENCO training:

- 1) Expertise development and practice-based opportunities to support children with physical disability;
- 2) Role (SENCO) in quality first teaching and
- 3) Expertise development and practice-based opportunities in relation to COP.

## 8. Summary of findings and recommendations

UCL Institute of Education undertook research to provide an in-depth understanding of the drivers, demands and supply for schools in relation to SEND-related CPD in the context of English schools and education settings.

### 8.1 Key Findings

#### Key Finding 1: Drivers of SEND-related CPD

*Within this report, a ‘driver’ is defined as a pressure on a school, a member of staff or external professional to seek out and identify SEND-related CPD*

**In terms of CPD, no respondents reported SEND-related CPD as being a priority and overall there was little evidence of strategic responses to external or internal drivers within schools.** It was consistently reported across all types of responding schools that the two main drivers for SEND-related CPD came from within schools as opposed to external factors and included:

- Meeting the identified needs of children on a roll (36% of responses: 370/1027); and
- SEND CPD as part of a School Development Plan (35% of responses: 359/1027).

Overall, there was little indication that CPD training practices are evaluated properly and systematically across schools and it is currently unclear how CPD training fed into the schools’ CPD subsequent planning or identification of what was needed in the future.

#### Key Finding 2: Barriers and facilitators of demand for SEND-related CPD

*‘Demand’ is defined as factors which influence or facilitate the demand for, and use of, particular SEND-related CPD, such as how schools identify CPD needs and choose CPD*

**Respondents across all types of schools reported that implementation of effective SEND-related CPD required the support of senior leadership teams (SLT)** to maintain staff interest and engagement in CPD. This SLT support was important in getting SEND training prioritised and sanctioned both financially and in terms of training time. When asked in an open question what helps staff to use a particular SEND-related CPD, comments (n= 1222) were classified into six themes considered to help facilitate demand:

- Quick and easy to use (24%: 289/1222);
- Cost: free, reasonable, funds available (8%: 92/1222);

- Seeing it demonstrated, being trained to use it, experience of using it (7%: 90/1222);
- Availability of resource (6%: 67/1222);
- Evidence or research-based (5%: 63/1222) and
- Recommended, word of mouth (4%: 51/1222).

Across mainstream schools, the major barriers to using SEND-related resources, strategies or training in the classroom were reported most commonly to be the cost of the activity, its time implications and its perceived efficacy. In addition to the barriers of cost and time, amongst the 19 special schools responding to the survey, 4 reported a lack of efficacy as a notable barrier. However, what this meant in practice was not specified.

### Key Finding 3: Availability and gaps in the supply of SEND-related CPD

**'Supply'** is defined as the availability of SEND CPD to schools, a member of staff or external professional across the age range, in both mainstream and special school settings

**The challenge for school staff was not the supply of SEND-related CPD, but teachers and SENCOs having sufficient opportunities (time and workload) to find out about, search for and access what CPD is available.** Once accessed, assessing its applicability to their school setting and assessing its evidence base and cost implications (including other staff time and implementation development time), were seen as important factors in relation to CPD provision.

A fifth of those respondents who answered the question (20%:194/943) identified specific gaps in SEND-related CPD. These were most commonly reported to be related to sensory impairment needs (5% of the gaps identified), physical disability (6%), and working with children with autism (13%). In addition, social and mental health related issues were also highlighted (8% and 11% respectively).

Survey respondents were asked an open question: *'How do you get to know about possible SEND-related training / CPD in your school?'* We received 849 answers summarised in five themes (with some respondents highlighting more than one theme):

- Information from emails including general and non-SEND-specific newsletters, or advertising general CPD (19%: 162/849)
- Information from the LA on CPD provision (18%: 154/849)
- Information found on the web or via social media (14%: 117/849)

- Information from non-LA commercial provision or third sector organisations or universities (6%: 50/849)
- Information from within the school setting, specifically from other staff (6%: 49/849)

The five main types of CPD suppliers, according to the surveyed respondents (n = 686) were:

- SENCOs (79%: 542/686);
- Local Authority (43%: 297/686);
- School team (19%: 134/686);
- Commercial organisation (18%: 124/686)
- Charity/third sector (14%: 93/686).

The overwhelming majority of training that did take place was delivered on the school site, usually in twilight sessions (3–6 pm) (57% of responses: 615/1072), which were usually between one to two hours in duration. Statutory training days were also used for SEND-related CPD linked to the school development plan, often for the whole school rather than individual teacher-specific work (52%: 562/1072). Linked to this, staff and SENCOs reported that they were seldom released from school for out of school CPD / training (a variety of reasons were offered including: keeping costs down, having minimal impact on staff workload, and minimising missed learning for pupils). Out of school training, when it did take place, was usually in close proximity to their school.

#### Key Finding 4: SEND specialist workforce: qualifications and CPD

**Across the SEND specialist workforce, the majority of respondents reported a need for training in how to provide and deliver effective CPD in schools.** Survey respondents who were sensory impairment and physical disability professionals who work in schools but are based in specialist support services (n = 144), did not highlight any gaps in CPD provision in relation to low incidence needs but reported difficulties: of gaining access to schools; of accessing staff time for training and of engaging SLT members in such training as a priority. For sensory impairment specialists and physical disability specialists, their own knowledge about how to support children with SEND in the classroom was often reported as limited and they themselves have CPD needs, including how to provide and lead CPD sessions. Thirty eight percent of SENCOs in our sample mentioned that they had never received any training in how to lead CPD training sessions, despite SENCOs providing the majority of SEND-related CPD sessions and many rely on learning on-the-job.

**At least a fifth of SENCOs and condition-specific specialists in the survey reported a lack of mandatory and/or relevant qualifications.** About 18% of the sensory impairment specialists (n= 78) in the current survey did not have the required mandatory qualifications. Although there are no mandatory qualifications for those working with physical disability, more than 20% of these specialists did not have any relevant qualification to support children with SEN and/or disabilities in general (n= 17 out of 70 responses). In relation to SENCO qualifications, 29% of SENCOs in our sample (n = 93 out of 320 responses) did not have the NASENCO Award and were not studying towards it.

#### Key Finding 5: Progression in SEND from Initial Teacher Training (ITT) to specialist practitioner

**There is no common pathway from ITT to specialist practitioner status.** Only a small number of respondents (n= 71) had progressed direct from Initial Teacher Training to a SEND specialism. There was little evidence that respondents had had opportunities to gain intermediate experiences or qualification progression-linked opportunities (through specific validated courses or particular instances or sequences of CPD activity). There was little evidence of any intermediate CPD that might lead a member of staff from post initial qualification moving on to SENCO or mandatory qualification progression. Even for experienced SENCOs, there were few SEND-related training opportunities (and updating activities) over time or regular CPD obligations as part of their SENCO status.

## 8.2 Recommendations

In our findings as well as in practice, the drivers, demands and supply of SEND-related CPD are interlinked. This is reflected in our recommendations, which together, seek to take a holistic and systematic approach to moving practice in the sector forward. At the end of each recommendation we have indicated the specific finding/s addressed.

### Recommendation 1

The study highlighted the need for SLTs to ensure that SEND-related issues and CPD remain high on school development plans. Therefore, the **Whole School SEND consortium, through its SEND Regional Lead network, should support education settings to use data from the SEND Index<sup>4</sup> to accurately identify SEND-related priorities and therefore CPD needs.** (Key Finding 1).

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<sup>4</sup> The purpose of the SEND Index is to provide regional data by Regional School Commissioner (RSC) area, so that it can be used to compare with both the national picture and with other RSC regions. The SEND Index will be published on the [SEND Gateway](https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/whole-school-send/send-research/): <https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/whole-school-send/send-research/>

## Recommendation 2

Education settings are generally adopting reactive rather than proactive strategies to identifying, implementing and evaluating SEND-related CPD. Currently, there is no common framework and little guidance to support schools in this process. Moreover, there is no common pathway from ITT to specialist SEND practitioner. Therefore, the DfE should consider publishing **guidance on SEND learning outcomes, linked to the Early Careers Framework** that would enable education settings to make more informed and strategic SEND-related CPD decisions, in addition to responding to the needs of the current pupils with SEN and/or disabilities in their settings. The content of such guidance could build on existing criteria-based frameworks for teacher competencies and skills such as The Autism Education Trust's Autism Competency Framework; the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust's Literacy Framework and Dyslexia-SpLD Professional Development Framework and the Communication Trust's Speech, Language and Communication Framework. (Key Findings 1, 2 and 5).

## Recommendations 3 and 4

The survey responses suggest that where SEND-related CPD resources are available, SENCOs and others have difficulties accessing these resources due to a combination of within school factors (lack of time and resources). Moreover, resourcing issues (such as cost) rather than strategic or evidence informed concerns can dominate what CPD is chosen. Therefore, a focus on the mechanisms to bridge this gap is required, particularly *from* SEND-related CPD suppliers *to* education settings, as this would enable SENCOS, for example, to make more informed decisions about SEND-related CPD resources. We make two recommendations to support this process. Firstly, at a regional level, the **Whole School SEND consortium, especially SEND Regional Leads, should focus on how to get SEND CPD messages into education settings as well as providing and signposting to CPD that reflects the priorities of a region.** Secondly, at a national level, **nasen should ensure that the SEND Gateway acts as an effective link to signpost the considerable SEND-CPD resources that already exist between the suppliers to the regions and individual education settings.** (Key Findings 2 and 3).

## Recommendation 5

There were inconsistent findings from the surveys and interviews regarding access to and the content of CPD resources on sensory impairment and physical disability. **CPD suppliers of sensory impairment and physical disability resources should collectively review the content of, and access to, CPD resources and report the findings to the sector.** (Key Findings 3 and 4).

## Recommendation 6

The findings showed that the vast majority of SEND-related CPD in school is delivered by the specialist SEND workforce including SENCOs and specialist teachers in sensory impairment and physical disability. However, this group reported a lack of training in how to deliver more effective CPD and lead change in their settings. **We recommend that the NASENCO providers group review the SENCO Award content on how to deliver CPD and lead change as well as create a CPD resource for current SENCOs to be added to the SEND gateway.** This resource should then be adapted for other specialist teachers by nasen. (Key Finding 4).

## Recommendation 7

A fifth of sensory impairment teachers and over a quarter of SENCOs who responded to the survey did not hold the mandatory qualifications. **Further investigation by DfE and Ofsted is recommended to ascertain a detailed, national picture of the qualifications held by specialist teachers and SENCOs.** (Key Finding 4)

## Annex 1: Overview of the sample of respondents

**Table A 1: Overview of the primary role identified by the respondents**

Category	Role	N
Senior leaders	Headteachers	51
	Assistant/ deputy head teachers	81
	Head of Service	11
SEN Management	SENCOs	466
	Aspiring SENCO	46
	Inclusion Manager	86
Teachers	Class teachers	114
	Learning support lead	18
	Curriculum Lead	15
	Pastoral Tutor	4
Teaching Assistants	Assistant teachers	39
Condition-Specific Specialist Teachers and Professionals	Specialist teacher for sensory impairment	34
	Qualified teacher for Vision Impaired	8
	Qualified Teacher for Hearing Impaired	10
	Qualified Teacher for Multi-Sensory Impaired	5
	Habilitation specialist	2

	Speech and Language Therapists	3
	Specialist support Assistant	4
	Qualified Dyslexia Practitioner	11
	Specialist Teacher for Physical Disability	63
	Educational Audiologist	3
	Community Support Worker	1
Other	Other	103
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1178</b>

**Table A 2: Overview of respondents by type of school**

Category	Type of School	N
Mainstream	Local Authority	420
	Academy	320
	Free	10
	Independent	32
Special	Local Authority	77
	Academy	25
	Free	3
	Independent	2
Designated Alternative Provision	Local Authority Alternative Provision	13
	Other Designated Alternative Provision	3
Other	Other	34
	MAT individual school	1
	Sixth form	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>943<sup>1</sup></b>

<sup>1</sup> As a number of specialist survey respondents did not belong to a particular type of school, the total sample for type of school N= 943

**Table A 3: Overview of the respondents per school age**

Age category	N
All ages	244
Infant	9
Junior	24
Primary	605
Secondary	275
Post-16	20
No response	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1178</b>

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