Access Arrangements for Secondary Students:

Experiences and Views of Educational Professionals,

Students, and their Parents/Guardians.

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate Access Arrangements (AAs). AAs allow students with specific learning difficulties, disabilities or medical needs to access assessments by making *reasonable adjustments.* A review of the literature revealed there is a problem with the perceived manageability of the AA system by some of those involved in implementing it, also that there are issues associated with the assessments used to decide on eligibility for AAs, the training needed to become an assessor and regulation of the system. The review indicated a lack of research with regard to the evidence base for specific AAs and the impact of the system on stakeholders.

The research involved gathering information on the views and experiences of those directly involved with AAs. There were three strands: a survey of SEND professionals, interviews with SENCOs involved in the implementation of AAs, and a small-scale survey of stakeholders - students with reading difficulties, parents/guardians and SENCOs. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model (2005) was used as a lens through which to understand the findings. The results provided confirmation of the issues identified in the literature review, as well as issues regarding lack of resources and differences in resources for AA across sectors. The systems within which the problematic issues are situated were reviewed.

A range of measures that might lead to potential alleviation of the current problems with the AA system were discussed. These include provision of a single organisation responsible for all examination boards, development of assessments standardised in the UK for use by AA assessors, consultation with the Government and the AA regulating bodies to ensure AAs are evidence-based and informed by stakeholder input. Finally, a call was made for further resources to train SEND professionals and provide CPD, and for centres, so that they can effectively provide for pupils who need AAs.

Impact Statement

This study has revealed inconsistencies in our current Access Arrangements (AA) system for public examinations. Despite being regulated by Ofqual, the system lacks an evidence-base supporting its efficacy. As a result of this investigation into AA on secondary students with SpLDs, many areas have come to light that should help future policy makers to ensure the system is fairer for those candidates who need it and less burdensome for those who have to administer it.

To date, this is one of the largest studies into AA conducted in the UK. Its robustness stems from a combination of methods used to gain insight into the current system. A large-scale questionnaire with over 513 respondents from the 12 regions of the U.K., 23 in-depth interviews and a survey of students with reading difficulties have been analysed revealing the current situation. Additionally, responses from all relevant sectors have been gathered - from mainstream, grammar and specialist secondary schools to FE colleges and from educational psychologists, to specialist teachers and assessors. Students were also involved in the reading study research.

It is hoped that the recommendations from the study will lead to changes in the current system, benefitting all those involved in the process and that it will change professional practice. It is suggested that one of the main changes to make the system more effective would be for the Government to devise a parallel testing kit for AA. They need to provide tests that are UK normed with a large standardised sample to demonstrate their reliability and validity. These tests could be carried out at all the Key Stages, including Key Stages 5 & 6, GCSE and A-Level years respectively, thus, gathering evidence to create a history of need at every key stage. These tests should be free to each centre, so that no centre is penalised for not being able to afford the current recognised standardised tests. In addition to this, there should be one official umbrella organisation covering all the awarding bodies in the country, as currently the JCQ only oversees eight of the examination awarding bodies. This would lessen the current administrative burden on centres that have to apply to different

examination boards. Centres should only need to make one application per candidate to cover all examinations the candidate takes. Annual changes made by this umbrella organisation need to be transparent and evidenced-based, something that currently is not occurring with the JCQ. This will enable practitioners to understand the rationale for the change in light of the evidence. These changes should also have a lead-in timeframe, to enable centres to plan for them, and not be expected to be implemented on the 1st September every academic year, as is currently the situation. Form 8, if it is to remain in use, should be valid through to university.

Another area in need of reform is identifying what AAs or a combination of AAs support particular SpLDs. As every candidate is different, a more student-led approach may be beneficial, rather than the current blanket approach of awarding extra time.

This study has given voice to all those working with AA and has highlighted inconsistencies in a system which should provide a universal experience for all who need and use it.

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Declaration

I, Emily McGhee, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Special thanks go to my colleagues on the EdD course. We began our EdD journey together in 2014 and a core group of us have always stuck together to support each other. Finally, thank you to my husband and parents for their support over the last six years.

Reflective Statement

When I embarked on the EdD in 2014 I did so because I wanted a new challenge. I chose the right course! The last five years have been challenging, very interesting and highly rewarding. I have achieved my goal of furthering my knowledge in the area of special needs, but there is so much more to learn. My quest for knowledge and understanding has only increased since commencing this degree.

I am dyslexic, and as a result, have always mistrusted my abilities despite the fact that I have achieved various degrees and hold a good job, I still feel undermined by my dyslexia, especially working in the field of education. It has made me conscious of my issues particularly when compared to those who are able to seemingly speak eloquently without getting tongue tied or turning red due to word finding issues, write without worrying about spelling mistakes and organising material so that it makes sense to others, as naturally, my organisation always makes sense to me! Being dyslexic makes you see things differently and that is a gift, not baggage, to be carried round for most of your life. Now, as a special needs teacher, I teach my students about their gift, as they are some of the most talented young people I have ever had the pleasure to work with. Not only are they intelligent, but they have outstanding personalities which will help them achieve in life. It took a huge leap of faith to apply for this degree. I did not want to tell anyone until my place was secured in case I failed. My students are proud of my achievements and I believe I have been a role model for them, teaching them that learning is life long and not just something you do at school to pass exams. My father recently commented that he gave me my life's work, as I inherited my dyslexia from him. He calls it, "the gift that keeps on giving!" He is right, of course.

The first year was the Foundations of Professionalism (FOP) and Methods of Enquiry (MOE) 1 & 2. I found the first term very interesting in terms of the subject but challenging in terms of academic writing. My writing was too descriptive and not analytical enough when exploring the literature and key concepts. My FOP essay was based on SEND professional organisations and

how they support members who are mid-career; those who have a certain level of knowledge and experience. I chose this as I had some issues with one of the organisations of which I was a member and wanted to explore my experience in light of their professionalism. At MOE 1 & 2 I explored the links between handwriting and long-term memory retention in students who were dyslexic and had been diagnosed with memory issues. I found these modules very interesting as we learnt about different research methods and their uses, studied the history of research design and learnt about the two opposing camps of research - quantitative and qualitative analysis and their proponents and then about the mixed methods approach which is heavily used in social research. This is the method I employed for my IFS and for my thesis. I believe it provides a more holistic view of a situation rather than hard data alone. During MOE 1 & 2 I explored research methods which included a survey and group interviews and used the software SPSS for coding the survey responses.

At the end of my first year I contacted my supervisor, Professor Jackie Masterson, and we discussed possible avenues of research for the IFS. As Jackie's research is in the areas of literacy development and difficulties, I mentioned a programme that I had devised to help some of my weaker Year 8 students with their reading fluency. I was a primary SENCO for 9 years and a trained Phono-graphix teacher, so I used this background when devising this programme. I discussed this with her and it was decided that I would develop my reading programme further to see if it had the benefits I witnessed with my Year 8 students. The research was experimental with a pre- and post-test design. I had 8 students ranging from Year 9-13 who all had below average reading scores. They underwent a training programme for 4 days a week for 9 weeks which involved them decoding multisyllable words relevant to their chosen subjects. The theory was, the more these students were able to see and decode their subject specific words, the easier it would be for them to recognise and decode them when reading the necessary literature for their subjects to improve automaticity of recall and fluency. All the students initially decoded Coxhead's Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) which had 570 of the most common words students should be able to decode and understand. Then each student was given word lists tailored to their chosen subjects. This design took

a great deal of dedication from all involved, my special needs team at school and the students who participated. At the end of the intervention the students completed a questionnaire and short interview with me to discuss how they found the intervention and to see if they believed it had any effects on their reading speed and fluency. All of them agreed that the intervention made them feel more confident in tackling unfamiliar words and that their speed and fluency had improved as a result. Of the 7 student's whose data was used, following the training, improved scores were observed in reading rate (effect size 0.76), single word reading (effect size 0.48) and comprehension (effect size 0.25) (McGhee, 2017). However, there were limitations with this study as the cohort was small, there were issues with some of the pre-test data as many different tests were used and there was no control group. It was decided that, as the results were promising, this was something to continue researching at thesis stage.

My experience at IFS was slightly fraught, as I had trouble navigating my way through the thousands of articles written on the theory of reading acquisition and associated sensory and memory difficulties. Although I had been teaching reading to primary students for nine years and then supporting those in secondary school with reading difficulties for a further nine years I had no idea of the intricacies with which some researchers were investigating deficits in certain areas which may impact on the acquisition of literacy skills. I became fascinated by many of these areas and lost my way through the literature. I do not know how many times I rewrote my Literature Review, but in the end, it became one of the biggest criticisms, as I became side-tracked when it came to the research on automaticity and fluency. Although I passed my IFS, I was disappointed, as I had established an experimental design, implemented it and it was found to be successful, it was again my writing style that seemed to penalise my final mark.

Although, the findings from my research proved positive, I could not continue with this at thesis level, as what was proposed was a larger cohort of students each being tested with 5 different tests at pre- and post-testing stage plus the intervention itself. This was a job for a full-time researcher and not one who has

a full-time job as a SENCO running a busy Learning Support department. I then rethought my final thesis year and decided that the most burning issue I deal with as a SENCO is the time involved in completing Access Arrangements (AA) for public examinations for my students. As this next stage of work should add to professional practice and contribute to knowledge, I thought this was a good subject to investigate.

For years I have had concerns about the AA process due to the annual changes made and to the increased volume of paperwork that seemed to duplicate existing practices. I then noticed how more and more centres were using 50% extra time for their candidates based on two standard scores in processing below 69. An increasing number of Form 8s were arriving with able candidates being awarded 50% extra time due to two low rapid automatic naming scores on CTOPP2. This, I thought shocking, as 50% extra time is also given for students with severe difficulties. The picture presented to me was not one of a level playing field. I was becoming increasingly frustrated by this process and system as it was so autocratic and those designing the system did not appear to listen to those who had to implement it. At a meeting with my supervisor I expressed my concerns about continuing with the reading intervention due to the volume of work needed to make it a robust study and explained my issues with AA. I was told to go away and write a proposal on my new area and then a decision could be made.

Over the summer of 2017 I wrote my proposal as my supervisor agreed it was a good area to investigate and not much had been written about this subject. I handed in my proposal in October 2017, once it had been approved by my principal supervisor, only to be told by my second supervisor that I could not continue, as there was no literature to embed the work in. However, this was precisely why I chose to tackle this subject; the lack of evidence-based literature that supports this system and its current processes. I was also told that this was a policy-based thesis and that I needed to have a psychological framework to work with, as I was based in that department. After some negotiations it was agreed that I could investigate this area using the child centred approach of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Model (2005). I was to investigate

whether the current AA system was child centred. We all agreed that this was a useful lens through which to conduct the research, as ultimately, it is the student who needs to be at the centre of AA in public examinations.

I am very pleased that I persevered with my investigations into AA. I used a mixed methods approach to the study. I received support from Communicate-ed who kindly distributed my questionnaire to their delegates attending an update refresher course on the latest AA changes around the country between September and November 2018. I have 513 responses in my data set from this questionnaire. I then conducted 23 interviews with SEND professionals to gain their perspective of the current system and its processes. I also contacted five schools who participated in a study relating to AA and students with reading difficulties. The data collected has been fascinating to analyse and many conclusions have been drawn which may help improve the system in the future for all who use it – students, assessors, specialist teachers and SENCOs.

My EdD journey has been a good one. The strand that links all of the pieces of work together is dyslexia. My investigation into the professional associations that support specialist teachers of dyslexia, my investigation into handwriting and memory on students with memory issues as a result of their dyslexia, my reading intervention to improve fluency and automaticity in a group of secondary students with dyslexia, and finally, my thesis on how the AA system removes barriers for those with dyslexia and other SpLDs. At each stage of my journey I have learnt new skills, and as a result, my confidence has grown. I have also had the pleasure of meeting some amazing people on the course who have become good friends. Travelling the EdD road with them has been important and hugely rewarding.

List of Abbreviations

AA   Access Arrangements

ADHD/ADD   Attentional Deficit Hyperactive Disorder/Attention Deficit Disorder

ALIS   A-Level Information System

ASD   Autistic Spectrum Disorder

BDA   British Dyslexia Association

CEM   Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring

CPD   Continuing Professional Practice

DA   Dyslexia Action

DCD   Developmental Co-ordination Disorder

DfE   Department for Education

DLD   Developmental Language Disorder

EHCP   Education Health and Care Plan

GCSE   General Certificate of Secondary Education

HADC   Helen Arkell Dyslexia Association

HI   Hearing Impairment

IT   Information Technology

JCQ	The Joint Council for Qualifications
MIDYS	Middle Years Information System
Ofqual	Office for Qualifications & Examination Regulation
PD	Physical Disability
SATs	Statutory Assessment Tests
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TA	Teaching Assistant
TD	Typically Developing Students
VI	Visual Impairment

1. Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

This study investigated the current system of Access Arrangements (AA) in the United Kingdom for public examinations. According to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), the main body that oversees the regulations regarding AA, AA for public examinations in secondary schools and further education colleges "allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment" (JCQ, 2018, p.3). They do this without changing the "demands of the assessment", while enabling awarding bodies to make *reasonable adjustments* as required by the Equality Act 2010 (JCQ, 2018, p.3). AAs assist students when sitting high stakes examinations, such as SATs, GCSEs, A-Levels, BTECs, Essential Skills qualifications, City & Guilds, Vocational qualifications and a host of other important qualifications. The most popular AA in the country is 25% extra time (Ofqual, 2019), but there are over 21 other AAs that can be awarded to students, depending on their individual need, such as the use of a reader, scribe or modified papers (JCQ Manual, 2018).

This study surveyed SEND Professionals[1] working with, or in secondary schools and Further Education Colleges (FE) about their views and practices regarding AA. In addition, interviews were conducted with SEND professionals to obtain further insight into the current situation. To gain understanding from the student's perspective, a survey was carried out with dyslexic[2] students. This research focused on students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs), the term used to describe students with a range of difficulties with aspects of

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[1] The term SEND Professionals will encompass SENCOs, Specialist Teachers and Assessors.

[2] According to the Rose Report (2009), "Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points. Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia. A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention." (p.29, 2009

learning, including dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit disorder. The aim, with the three strands of the study, was to create a comprehensive and contemporaneous picture of the situation regarding AA.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory (2005) was employed as a theoretical framework for the research. The theory is composed of systems that, it is argued, can be used to represent the complexity of the various systems that are involved in the implementation of AAs, including government legislation, awarding bodies, schools, families, etc. Since AAs are intended to remove barriers for students/candidates with disabilities when sitting public examinations, gathering views from across the UK should indicate whether those involved experience a system that is effective for students with specific needs.

1.2 Literature Review

This chapter will outline the history of AA and the government policies relating to it. It will identify issues with the current system and its processes and how these impact upon SEND professionals and students in secondary schools and FE colleges. It will introduce the theoretical framework used in the research to explain and examine the complexity of the AA system and its processes. Finally, an outline of how the present research addressed the issues identified in the *Literature Review* is presented.

1.2.1 Literature search

A search of the following journals was undertaken: *British Journal of Educational Psychology, British Journal of Special Education*, *Assessment & Development Matters, NASEN Journal, International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, Studies in Higher Education, Journal of Applied School Psychology, Journal of Learning Disabilities, Remedial and Special Education, Developmental Psychology, Support for Learning, Research in Human Development and American Educational Research Association*. Search words and phrases included 'access arrangements', 'extra time', 'Joint Council for Qualifications', 'standardised assessments', 'assessment accommodations', 'testing' and ''The SpLD Assessment Standards Committee' (SASC). In addition, an online search through the sites of Sage Publications, Wiley online, Elsevier and Taylor & Francis also occurred, as did a trawl through the IOE and UCL library sites. Additionally, publications on the background of AA, such as special exam arrangements or accommodation arrangements were searched for using Google Scholar, the Education in England website and the American NIH library online. When articles were sourced and relevant to the topic, their references were also investigated, to delve further into the literature available on the subject.

1.3 History of AA

The history of AA is embedded in government legislation that stems from the early 1980s and this legislation has formed the foundation of our present-day system. The aim of the legislation was to make sure that those with special educational needs have fair access to public assessments and examinations. Regulating public examinations in England is The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). Ofqual is a government department that regulates qualifications, exams and tests in England. According to a document published by Ofqual on reasonable adjustments (2017), "Awarding organisations have a duty, under the Equality Act 2010, to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students taking their qualifications." (2017, p.3)[i]. Ofqual's relationship with the JCQ is not a regulatory one. However, it regulates the awarding bodies that form the JCQ (D. Tonin, Ofqual, personal communication, January 3, 2020).

The JCQ's aims are to "reduce bureaucracy for schools and colleges by facilitating and delivering common administrative arrangements for examinations; provide a forum for strategic debate, information exchange and expression of common interest amongst awarding bodies; enable member awarding bodies to jointly express views and collectively respond to national issues; and to provide a channel for collective discussion with key stakeholders including the HE sector, teachers, and their representative organisations."(JCQ, Our Aims, 2019, December 5)

The JCQ acts as an umbrella organisation representing the views of eight of the largest awarding bodies in the UK offering GCSE and GCE examinations and vocational qualifications. The boards include Assessment and Qualifications Alliance; Council for the Curriculum, Examinations, and Assessment; Pearson; NCEF; The Scottish Qualifications Authority; Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR); City & Guilds, and Welsh Joint Education Committee. In addition, there are other awarding bodies that provide qualifications, such as the Cambridge International Examinations. All awarding bodies have to abide by the Equality Act 2010 to enable students with SEND to access examinations

without changing the construct of an examination. It is then up to the individual centres (the schools and FE colleges) to assess, apply and award appropriate AA for individual SEND candidates.

1.4 A brief history of the legislation regarding SEND and AA

There are several pieces of legislation and government reports that have been important in shaping and guiding AA. The Warnock Report (1978)[ii] provided an in-depth examination into and discussion on the law on special educational needs (SEN) at the time. It identified the need for children with SEN to be viewed and treated as individuals, with individual educational requirements. It recognised the concept of inclusion for children with SEN in mainstream classes. Before this time students with difficulties were usually educated in specialist environments. The Warnock Report provided the findings for The Education Act 1981. This act introduced Statements of Special Educational Needs for students with SEND who needed to have additional arrangements in place to support their placement at a mainstream school. The local authorities were to provide additional funding to schools to support students with SEND to make sure they could access the curriculum along with their mainstream counterparts.

In 1988 the Education Reform Act introduced the National Curriculum[3] in all schools in England and Wales. This act established a basic curriculum for all children to be taught. It also introduced national testing at Key Stages in a student's life to determine their progress. The SEN Code of Practice (1994) saw the development and creation of the role of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs). A SENCO must work with the whole school to promote inclusion for students with SEND, to make sure all students are treated equally and fairly, whatever their educational needs. SENCOs must help to maintain and review a SEND register for all students with SEND in their centres. In addition, SENCOs are now accountable for AA in their centres (JCQ, 2018, p.81).

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[3] http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1988-education-reform-act.pdf

The Dearing Review of Qualifications (1997) was conducted "to make recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, including support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years." (1997, p.1) It noted that there were discrepancies between examination awarding bodies in procedures regarding special arrangements in examinations for students with disabilities and recommended that the system be unified. The Dearing report recognised the need to have AA in place to help students with SEND attain places at FE and Higher Education establishments. It stated, "the best predictor of educational achievement at 18 is achievement at 16" (1997, p.107).

AA was further shaped through the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA, 2001) which was an adjunct to the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). SENDA required educational establishments to make *reasonable adjustments* to ensure people with disabilities or special needs were provided with the same opportunities as those who were not disabled. This act was then superseded by the Disability Act of 2005 which was further superseded by the Equality Act of 2010[4]. *Reasonable adjustments* are meant to create a level playing field so that disabled people are not disadvantaged. Modifications were to be made to classroom practice and examinations in order to remove barriers for disabled students.

There were several reports that followed, including Every Child Matters (2003) and Removing Barriers to Learning (2004), with the latter noting the Government's requirement for teachers to be trained in SEN. One key piece of legislation that SENCOs are required to be familiar with is The Education Act 1996[iii] which contains the laws on SEN under Part IV, Chapter 1, 312. This act importantly provided parents of children with SEN with more rights to appeal against a local authorities' provision of SEN. There is also the SEN Code of Practice[iv] (2001, updated in 2015) that provides further legal requirements and

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[4] The Act protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society. **It** legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. A person is **disabled** under the Act if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to carry out normal daily activities. (www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance, accessed on 22.11.17)

guidance on the education of children with SEND. The update included the new policy of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which from April 2018, superseded Statements of Education. An EHCP is a legal document provided by the local authority which outlines a student's SEND needs and the support they require to achieve their potential. This document also provides the student with a voice regarding their desires and aspirations for their future, as it enables them to write their wishes into the document. It has the ability to support students up until the age of 25 years. It is supposed to be a more comprehensive approach to providing support for a student with SEND, as it involves the input of all the services including medical, educational, and social support.

Other developments that were aimed at supporting students with SEND included the 1997 green paper entitled "Excellence for All"[v] which was a reappraisal of the way schools were dealing with SEND students. This paper looked at developing the role of the educational psychologist and allowed for assessments to be carried out by those holding The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Diploma in Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD). It was noted that, across the UK, SEND professionals were using different definitions when determining SpLD, therefore in 1998 the School's Curriculum & Assessment Authority, the precursor to the JCQ, set out to enforce unanimity amongst the geographic regions in the UK.

In 2005 the Assessment Practising Certificate was established by the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS) with the aim of enhancing the standing and practice of SEND professionals who were assessors, giving them a recognised assessment qualification. In 2009 the Rose Report[vi] established the need for dyslexia to be recognised in schools, for reading intervention programmes to be implemented to support those students who were not achieving the expected reading levels for their age, and for specialist teachers to be available in all schools to assist dyslexic students. The local authorities provided funding to train these specialist teachers, which saw an increase in course providers offering specialist SEND training.

Under the current system for awarding AAs, the centre's SENCO is responsible for awarding these. They are awarded to students who will be substantially disadvantaged as a result of their SEND when taking public examinations in comparison to those students who are not disabled. In order to satisfy the current criteria for applying for AA a history of need for each student must be demonstrated, as well as the student having below average standardised test scores in processing. In addition to this, medical evidence may be submitted from a specialist, for example, a letter from a consultant paediatrician confirming an ADHD diagnosis. Once all the evidence is in place and SENCOs believe they have all the documentation necessary to support an application following the current JCQ guidelines (published annually in *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*), AAs are applied for with AA-online, the awarding bodies' electronic online portal. However, in Scotland, the process is different as the decision to award AAs is delegated to schools. The class teacher must recommend an assessment and gather all the evidence of a student's need. They then hold the paperwork to justify their recommendation for AA for inspection purposes.

Having discussed the influences that have shaped the AA system and current practices, the coverage will now turn to concerns that have been raised with the system. The issues covered relate closely to the researcher's own professional experiences as a SENCO in an independent senior school.

1.5 Access arrangements: Fit for purpose?

This section will outline the issues surrounding the manageability of the AA system in terms of centre's dealing with the requirements needed to support a student's AA application in relation to the JCQ criteria and inspection process. It will also discuss issues relating to the training of AA assessors, specialist teaching input and communication about AA with students and their parents/guardians.

1.5.1 Manageability and fairness of the AA system

Concerns have been raised regarding the manageability of the AA system and the fairness of its processes. Woods (2007) reported the results of a survey of specialist teachers involved in the implementation of GCSE examination access arrangements. Findings revealed that the system was considered manageable by only 20% of the 205 teachers surveyed and was considered fair by only 25%. Woods noted that "the most commonly cited reasons given for the 'unmanageability' of the system for arranging AA in school were the time-consuming, complex and changing requirements of the JCQ" (Woods, 2007, p.91). Hipkiss (2019) recently noted with regard to the annual JCQ changes that the International Examination Officers Association (IEOA) calculated there were 100 changes in the 2014-2015 and 124 in the 2015–2016 *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* documentation (IEOA, 2018, p.7 cited in Hipkiss, 2019, p.69).

Woods (2007) reported that the system was considered unfair, as it did not provide equality of access to AAs for students (question 2 in the survey). Reasons for this were a lack of staff time needed to assess students for eligibility for AAs using the JCQ prescribed assessments, and the time needed to complete the AA application for each student. It was noted that lack of time was less of an issue in independent schools. Respondents also noted differences in interpretations of assessors of the JCQ guidance on AAs, differences in effectiveness of schools' screening procedures for assessment needs, and in their awareness about available AA. Respondents also cited (under question 1 on manageability of the system) lack of resources when having to buy new standardised tests for testing for AA, and logistical problems of providing AA in terms of extra rooms and staff, which impacted on school resources.

Question 3 in the survey asked whether respondents thought it appropriate to extend access arrangements. 70% of participants responded 'Yes' to this question, but many indicated that this relied on having more resources, such as

readers, scribes and computers for word processing. One of the reasons given for extending AA was that the cut-off scores for AA eligibility were arbitrary.

In order to see if there were changes over time, Woods, James, and Hipkiss (2018) conducted a further survey with 263 respondents involved in delivering AA for GCSE examinations. The findings revealed that 43% of respondents believed the system to be unmanageable, 24% were ambivalent and 25% believed it was manageable (Woods et al. 2018, p.242). With regards to fairness, 21% believed it was unfair, 30% were ambivalent and 46% believed it was a fair system (Woods et al. 2018, p.242). The final question related to extending AA. 22% believed it should not be extended, 10% were ambivalent and 64% responded that AA should be extended (Woods et al. 2018, p.242). Comparing results with the earlier study, it appears that SEND professionals believed the system had become more manageable and fairer. This may be due to the JCQ introducing an online application system, known as AA-online, making it slightly easier to process applications. However, the manageability of this process is dependent on the setting; a breakdown of respondents' settings is not provided in the study. For example, those working in the FE sector have to collect AA applications from previous senior schools to apply for their new students' AAs. This is a particular issue as many students have to resit their English and Maths GCSE in the November shortly after they commence their studies. Without evidence of need from previous centres, or an existing relationship with previous centres, FE colleges have to retest these students and collect evidence of need in a very short space of time.

As noted above, the majority of respondents (64%) in the study by Woods et al. (2018) believed that more could be achieved in terms of extending AA to more candidates. Woods et al. (2018) concluded that there was still variability in terms of how centres manage the AA process and this, to a large extent, was due to limitations in school resources to identify students and provide AAs. In addition, the study noted that issues still persisted with the system in regard to the time needed to complete the JCQ paperwork and the annual changes it makes to the process, the validity and operation of the tests used for AA and the cut-off scores for eligibility. These issues relating to assessment for eligibility

are discussed further in Section 1.5.2 With regard to the JCQ paperwork and inspection process, Hipkiss states "there is no set procedure available to centres and a distinct lack of detailed instructions about what evidence needs to be available" (Hipkiss, 2019, p.60) for inspections. This causes ambiguity, as centres have to guess the amount of evidence paperwork needed to be kept on file per candidate. Woods et al. (2018) also identified that communication and consultation with Ofqual to understand views of stakeholders was lacking and recommended "a range of stakeholders, including young people, employers and SENCos, should be regularly and systematically consulted and communicated with by Ofqual, with data being made available to the JCQ which oversees the detailed management of access arrangements" (Woods et al., 2018, p.205).

In the *Interim Progress Report in response to the Independent Commission on Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) the JCQ recognise that there is a need to improve communications with candidates and parents. In addition, they propose to consult with stakeholders to identify needs, to consider training provision and encourage a culture of CPD (JCQ, Response to the Independent Commission on Malpractice, 2019, p.8). This report highlights what Woods et al. (2018) have identified as significant issues with the current AA system.

1.5.2 Issues with the assessment process for determining eligibility for AA

The recommendation for awarding AAs is based on confirming that a "candidate has persistent and significant difficulties when accessing and processing information and is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010" (JCQ Manual 2018-19, p.26). Confirmation usually involves the candidate being individually assessed with specialist tests. These assessments must identify that a student has a below average processing ability. A processing task can be associated with written output, memory or reading difficulties. Two aspects of assessment processes will be discussed. The first will deal with the tests used, and the second will deal with the training of assessors who determine students' eligibility for AA.

1.5.3 AA Testing - validity and reliability

The SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) provides a list of recommended assessments that assessors can use when conducting specialist assessments for AA and for the Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA). This list has been updated three times, in 2016, 2018 and June 2020 since its introduction in 2005. A number of writers have noted issues with the recommended assessments. Smythe (2014) argues that not all of the tests recommended for use in awarding AAs are valid and reliable measures for a UK population because many were developed in the US, such as *The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing, 2nd Edition* (Wagner, Torgesen, Rashotte, & Pearson, 2013). This was normed on a US population, composed of different ethnic and cultural groups compared to the UK population. These different cultural and linguistic experiences may impact on the way in which the population responds to the test.

Smythe (2014) raised another issue with tests used for AA regarding the size of standardisation samples. For example, the *Wide Range Intelligence Test* (Glutting, Adams, & Sheslow, 2000), normed in America, only has between 87 and 125 participants in each age group. This is considerably fewer than the number stipulated by The European Federation of Psychologists' Associations who suggest 150 participants per age band (EFPA, 2009 cited in Smythe, 2014). Many tests used in the UK, on the SASC list, that were developed in America do not have such a large sample size per age group, such as, *The Wide Range Achievement Test* 4 (Smythe, 2014, p.28).

An issue, raised by Vladescue (2007), concerns the use of individual subtests from larger tests. Individual subtests are included on the SASC website and it is up to the individual assessor's discretion which to use. Vladescue notes that a minimum correlation of .90 for reliability of an assessment is important when using a test to make educational decisions about a student. Vladescue explains that because subtests have fewer items than composites, they are usually less reliable and should not usually be used to support eligibility decisions. In evaluating the *Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement II* (KTEAII, Kaufman

& Kaufman, 2004), Vladescue found that "the majority of the written expression and oral language subtest correlations did not exceed .90." (Vladescue, 2007, p.7). However, SASC guidance from June 2016 for the latest version of the KTEA test, the KTEAIII (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2014), states that "Tests within a composite score or across the areas can be selected giving the assessor a wide and varied selection" (SASC Downloads, 2016).

It is not just American tests that are problematic with regard to standardisation; UK tests also appear to have issues. The researcher has looked into the *Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting* (DASH, Barnett, Henderson, Scheib, & Schulz, 2007) which covers age 9 to 16 years. This was normed on a UK sample of 546 participants (DASH Manual, 2007, p.70). *The DASH 17+* (Barnett et al., 2011), a test for handwriting which covers the ages of 17 to 25, was normed on a sample of 393 participants. This test is on the SASC list of recommended tests and is one of the main tests used for AA for freewriting. There are only two other handwriting tests on the SASC list, but one is not standardised and the other has a proviso, as it does not provide a measure of writing speed (SASC, Revised Test Guidelines September, 2018, p.39-40).

Another UK test which is on the SASC list is the *Adult Reading Test 2* (ART2, Brooks, Everatt, & Fidler, 2016). This test is a reading test used by secondary schools, colleges and HE institutions to assess reading accuracy, speed and comprehension and covers the age range 16 to 64 years. It is the only test currently available in the UK that offers silent reading speed norms for passage reading, so it is a popular test for assessors. It has a standardisation sample of 593 tertiary education students (ART2 Manual, 2016, p.23).

1.5.4 Quality assurance for the training of AA assessors

Initially, to become an AA assessor an OCR Level 7 Diploma in SpLD needed to be obtained. This course lasted one academic year and required at least 600 hours' worth of specialist assessment. In addition to this Level 7 training on offer, other training options have become available (these are outlined below). A recent qualification, that has been approved by the Joint Council for

Qualifications (JCQ) enables a specialist teacher to assess after completing a course that requires 100 hours of assessment.

Bell (2013) studied a group of teachers embarking on training courses offered in a university to learn how to assess and support students with dyslexia. Her study comprised 75 participants who came from varying backgrounds. Six were SENCOs who were in the process of completing their NASENCO award, 58 had QTS but 17 were unqualified teachers who were working with SEND students and wanted to gain further insight into the students they were supporting. Bell (2013) discovered, via a questionnaire, that many of these participants, despite being practitioners, had little knowledge of the recent research into dyslexia, for example, understanding about working memory and phonological awareness. She also reported that 53% of her cohort who worked in the primary sector had no understanding of the normal development of reading and 37% had little or no knowledge of phonics.

Bell's (2013) study indicates that courses on offer to assess and become specialist teachers may need a more rigorous entry criteria, or more detailed content, to ensure that the participants have the right level of qualification. This is especially true when providing evidence for AA. Bell (2013) says "that teachers understand that they need to access high-quality training... It is a statutory requirement that institutions provide equal access for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in public examinations… but this requires that teachers who carry out assessments must have appropriate qualifications" (2013, p.111).

McMurray, O'Callaghan and McVeigh (2017) highlighted issues in the teacher-based assessment of students with literacy difficulties for AA. In their research they collected data from 27 teachers attending a module in psychometrics and report writing to gain the skills to become an AA assessor. Nine of the teachers participating already held qualifications in educational testing and 18 had no previous qualifications. At the end of the study there were only 17 teachers left as many were advised to withdraw from the course; however, they do not state how many teachers left who had previous educational testing qualifications, or

what level of qualifications these teachers held in educational testing. They explain that four of the teachers with existing qualifications in educational testing conducted a test that they had not been trained on, the WIAT-IIT, as they felt confident in transferring their skills to other tests. When first administering this test they all failed. McMurray et al. (2017) believe that this highlights the need for specific training and formative feedback on each assessment test used for AA to become competent. They state that there was no difference in performance of teachers who already had existing testing qualifications to those who did not.

The study highlighted the need for both a high level of theoretical knowledge that underpins educational testing and also practical skills involved in administering tests. Many of the participants passed the theoretical assessment but failed on the practical assessment of testing. The findings suggest that psychometric testing requires particular skills and regular practice, to maintain high standards, to ensure results from standardised tests used for AA are valid.

McMurray et al. (2017) believe that courses offering training for AA assessors need to provide the following three aspects: a theoretical and practical approach to educational testing, a focus on SpLDs in particular literacy difficulties to fully understand the needs of these conditions, such as dyslexia, and an analysis of a range of assessment findings, report writing and issues with AA. If a course does not provide this level of study, then it should not meet the Level 7 qualification. They believe that a Level 7 assessor must have this level of experience to be a competent AA assessor.

In alignment with the JCQ approved qualifications the three main course providers that deliver courses on how to assess for AA are, Communicate-ed's *PAPPA* (Postgraduate Award of Proficiency in Assessment for Access Arrangements), PATOSS *AAA* (Assessing for Access Arrangements)[vii] and Real Training *CP3A* (Certificate in Psychometric Testing, Assessment and Access Arrangements)[viii]. These courses are popular as they provide a combination of distance learning and face to face tutorials.

Communicate-ed's *PAPPA* requires you to hold a degree and teaching certificate, or Level 5 diploma in teaching students with SpLDs. Once you complete the *PAPPA* qualification in understanding the principles of psychometric testing and assessing for AA with 100 hours of work relating to assessment you will gain a "Postgraduate, equivalent to Level 7 on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)"[ix] which will allow you to assess for AA. Other information available on their website explains that this qualification does not allow you to assess for the DSA or to diagnose if someone has a SpLD, to obtain this training you will need to complete the OCR Level 7 with 600 hours of training (OCR Manual, 2016, p.6).

The PATOSS *AAA* course with 200 hours of study will enable the practitioner to become an assessor for AA just like the *PAPPA*. In addition, there are 30 hours of taught sessions, both face-to-face and online. The prerequisites for this course are a degree, QTS or Level 5 diploma in SpLD. Again, the website says, "Meeting the JCQ requirements for access arrangements assessor training and is equivalent to Level 7"[x]. Real Training offer the *CP3A.* To be eligible for this course you need to hold "QTS or QTLS, or be a teacher/tutor in FE, HE or the independent or non-maintained sector, or employed as an HLTA or hold the HLTA qualification.

McMurray et al. (2017) explain that courses that profess to be equivalent to a Level 7 are taken by students who already have a Level 5 diploma and therefore, the participants of these courses believe these accreditations give an equivalent Level 7. They believe that "courses that include less than the minimum 600 hours of study should withdraw their claim to Level 7 equivalence" (McMurray et al. 2017, p.5).

The many training pathways to become an AA assessor are confusing because of the different course requirements, both in terms of the level of existing qualifications needed to do these courses and their content. McMurray et al. (2017) state that "there is considerable variation in the content and assessment of the courses on offer…currently a 'grey area' in the AA assessor pathway specified by JCQ in terms of…the exact details of what course content is

required and what should be assessed to ensure that teachers have the required Level 7" (McMurray et al., 2017, p.4). The JCQ have stipulated that assessors need to have a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment, thus McMurray et al. (2017) are correct in saying that the JCQ should provide more detail on the content and length with the various training providers. Different pathways, involving different levels of study may lead to different levels of competence among assessors.

1.5.5 Issues with access arrangements: suitability and student involvement

There is scant evidence in the literature to suggest which AAs remove barriers for a particular SpLD or combination of SpLDs.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the AAs allocated in the UK according to Ofqual statistics for 2016/17 to 2018/19. The arrangement of 25% extra time in an examination is the most common of all the AAs, as can be seen in the table.

Table 1

Ofqual figures for Access Arrangements from 2016/17 to 2018/19 for students in secondary school and FE in the UK

Type of Arrangement	Number			% Of Students Taking Exams		
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
25% extra time	223,405	235,060	256,710	15.4	17.08	19.4
Computer reader/reader	98,225	95,785	95,570	6.8	7.3	7.2
Scribe/speech recognition technology	41,960	41,070	41,255	2.9	3.1	3.1
Coloured/enlarged exam paper	17,605	8,095	Delegated as a centre arrangement in 1.9.18	1.2	0.6	-
Extra time over 25%	5,525	5,190	5,300	0.4	0.4	0.4
Other arrangements	6,235	5,925	3,315	-	-	-
				-	-	-
Total	392,955	391,130	404,600			

Note: Source
UK Government, Assets Publishing Service, AA for GCSE, AS and A Level (2017-2018)

Extra time, as an accommodation, is the easiest change that can be made to an examination paper, as it provides access without changing the construct of the

exam; however, this is only when speed of response is not a construct being measured (Sireci & Pitoniak, 2007, cited in Kettler & Elliott, 2010). AAs should not change the target skill or knowledge needed for a test; they should only provide access to enable the student to take that test.

25% extra time is the most commonly awarded AA as evidenced by the Ofqual statistics in Table 1. Trying to discover the evidence base for the time allocations of 25%, 50% and 100% extra time in the literature has proven to be difficult.

According to the JCQ (2019-2020) a standardised score of 84 or less in a processing task, in conjunction with teacher-based evidence demonstrating a student's need, should result in the award of 25% extra time in the UK. To be awarded 50% extra time in the UK two test scores in different areas of processing of 69 or below are required.

In the UK the most commonly awarded extra time is 25% (Ofqual, 2019). In America the standard amount of extra time awarded is 50% (CollegeBoard, 2020), although it is becoming common to award 100% extra time for fear of disadvantaging students (Cahalan-Laitusis, King, Cline & Bridgeman, 2006). This may be due to the lack of evidence-base in this area. Commentators have argued that there is no evidence base to support the 25% and 50% extra time arrangements for students with SpLDs (Mcloughlin, 2015; Duncan & Purcell, 2017). McLoughlin (2015) in an article on assessment and the JCQ states, "there are no studies that show it to be better than 20% or worse than 30% (McLoughlin, 2015, p.11).

Lovett (2011) in an article on extended time accommodations in the USA says, "there is no empirical justification for these particular time amounts" … "more empirical investigation is warranted" (Lovett, 2010, p.631). Sokal and Vermette (2017) support this and state that the research literature lacks studies on what appropriate time allowances should be (2017, p.190). Duncan and Purcell (2017) suggest that 25% extra time is for practical reasons, due to time constraints when conducting examinations. They, too, believe that 25% extra time is not supported by empirical evidence, rather it is given as a blanket

arrangement to compensate for many different types of processing disorders. They believe the convention of extra time presupposes that all students with a SpLD are a homogenous group, which is not the case. Students with SpLDs can vary across the spectrum and have an overlap of different spectrums (Duncan & Purcell, 2017).

Duncan and Purcell (2017) carried out a study in the UK with university students with SpLDs who were taking examinations in humanity subjects. The study had 137 participants, 67 had a diagnosis of SpLD and 70 were typically developing (TD). Of the students with SpLD, 31 students had 25% additional time, and 36 had 25% additional time plus the use of a word processor. The students with SpLDs all had specialist assessment reports that outlined their requirements when taking examinations. The TD participants took the same exam under standard conditions.

The participants came from the Faculties of English, History and Law. The TD and SpLD groups were matched by year of study and faculty when taking the exam. The results revealed that the TD group had a significantly higher mean exam mark than the candidates with SpLDs who handwrote and had extra time, but not the candidates who had extra time and used a word processor. Duncan and Purcell (2017) state that many variables when conducting this study could not be accounted for and therefore it is difficult to know if this would be the case if this study was conducted again. However, the results indicated that the combination of use of a word processor with extra time may be better than just extra time alone for students with SpLDs. This could be because using a word processor helps to reduce demands on other processes, such as working memory, spelling, and handwriting fluency, therefore, leaving more cognitive resources free to tackle the higher-order processes needed for completing essays (Duncan & Purcell, 2017, p.19). Clearly this is just one study, and it had a relatively small sample size. A study conducted in America on a different group of candidates with SpLDs also looked at the benefits of extra time.

Wadley and Liljequist (2013) conducted a study with university students with ADHD sitting a Maths exam. 61 students with ADHD and 68 TD students took

part in the study. Participants with ADHD and TD participants were randomly assigned to one of two test conditions, they were either in a group that had extra time or standard time. There were 30 students with ADHD and 37 TD students in the extra time group and in the standard time group there were 31 ADHD students and 31 TD. Findings revealed that, despite having extra time, the ADHD group took longer to complete the maths test than their TD counterparts, and the extra time had no significant bearing on their final grade. The students with ADHD in the extra time group in terms of items correct on the maths test had a mean score of 7.57 compared to their TD counterparts who scored 11.68, and extra time had no significant bearing on their final grade. However, the students with ADHD in the standard time group scored 9.23 compared to the TD who scored 11.87. The maximum items correct in this maths test was 25. The scores may suggest that extra time for ADHD may not be the best AA, as those students with ADHD had a better mean score when given standard time and not extra time.

Unlike the Duncan and Purcell's (2017) UK study where 25% was the extra time awarded, in the Wadey and Liljequist (2013) study the candidates with extra time had 100% additional time to complete the test, which was 45 minutes, yet on average the ADHD students only used 26.44 minutes to complete the test, which was substantially under the time they were entitled to. The TD students took 22.45 minutes, so neither group took advantage of the extra time allowed. The students with SpLD may have become distracted with the amount of extra time and have lost focus during the test. Therefore, even with 100% extra time the ADHD group underperformed compared to the TD group.

Wadley and Liljequists (2013) study provides an example where awarding extra time, the most common form of AA for an examination both in the UK and USA, may not have been the most appropriate for this group of students. ADHD students may benefit more from being in their own room to take tests, to minimise distractions. The researchers acknowledged that there were limitations in their study as the students with ADHD may have been on prescription medication for their condition and this data was not collected by the researchers. This group of students may also have other SpLDs that co-occur

with their ADHD, making this cohort a complex one to investigate, due to other variables that may have affected the outcome.

Although the Duncan and Purcell (2017) and Wadley and Liljequist (2013) studies were conducted with relatively small numbers of participants, and only with university students, they provide useful information. It would seem that we are far from understanding which AAs are most effective for students with different SpLDs. Authors have called for tailor-made AAs, such as extra time, the use of a laptop, reading software and own room. However, as noted above, these take time to implement and are costly to resource. It seems important that more research is carried out to address the issue of which AAs are most effective for different SpLDs, and also which are most cost-effective in terms of the benefits afforded, in order to provide an evidence base for recommendations. This issue is linked with the final concern to be raised in the review – which relates to student involvement and consultation in the process of AAs.

1.5.6 Student, parent/carer and teacher views on AA

Information is lacking on student, parent/carer and teachers' views about AA. In order to help rectify this, Woods (2010) conducted a study involving interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. The research was carried out with 86 students with disabilities to ascertain their experiences, as well as those of their parents/guardians' and teachers' of the AA system. Woods suggested that there is a "paucity of monitoring" the effect of AA on students in terms of how they, their parents/guardians are affected by AA. The findings revealed that students and parents/guardians described their experiences of the AA system, as it was then, as having a label and that label meant you were entitled to certain adjustments because of your SpLD. In fact, an individualistic approach to a student's SpLD was needed. One teacher wrote "You are working with individuals all of the time, there is no general rule and as soon as you bring in a general rule, there's something different about a case which comes along to challenge it." (Woods 2010, p.26). The study revealed that most students (88%) reported that they were never consulted about their need for AA.

Elliot and Marquart (2004) believe it is critical to understand the way students perceive their AA. They believe students view their AA in one of two ways. Some students may view them as "strategies that enable them to demonstrate their best work" whilst other students see AA "as indicative of the skills they lack to complete tests successfully on their own" (Elliot & Marquart, 2004, p.353). It is important to understand the views of students to make sure these issues do not affect their self-confidence and belief in their abilities.

A study indicating the benefit of student consultation and involvement in the AA process is that of Tyrrell and Woods (2018). The research involved three Year 7 students with ASD. The JCQ guidance stated that students with ASD may benefit from having rest breaks, extra time, a reader, modified language papers, a laptop or a scribe in examinations (JCQ Regulations, 2018, p.15). The students were asked to draw or describe what made a test successful or not for them. They were also asked to sort cards which had the JCQ recommended arrangements for ASD on them, and some additional cards (e.g., 'help with anxiety'), according to whether or not they would be helpful. The students and their teacher/SENCO were interviewed to ascertain whether gaining the student's voice was important when deciding AAs.

The responses from the interviews revealed that the students appreciated being involved in deciding what was the best AA for them. The researchers' commented that there were "a range of benefits associated with student involvement in deciding on their AA. These included less common AA being more likely to be suggested… more tailored to the individual and therefore more …useful." (Tyrell & Woods, 2018, p.402). Comments from participants revealed that this way of working helped student's emotional wellbeing. One of the students, called Amy, said that taking part in the study helped her because people were interested in her needs and this increased her self-confidence. A teacher commented that until you ask a student about their arrangements you would not necessarily understand that even small adjustments, such as supplying ear plugs, would make a big impact on their way of working when sitting examinations.

In this study the students were involved in discussion with teachers and SENCOs to establish the best AA or combination of AAs for them. The research, despite being conducted on a small number of students, provided qualitative data indicating that it is beneficial to involve students in arranging AAs. However, this is heavily reliant on having enough staff and resources to implement arrangements. Teachers involved in the study commented that they needed time to assess and provide for the students' AAs and in addition, find physical resources, such as own rooms and laptops, which may be difficult for some centres, due to lack of funding and resources, both physical and human.

1.5.7 Interim summary of issues with the current AA system

The literature search has revealed issues with the current AA system. There seem to be problems with the manageability of the process for the educational professionals involved in implementing AAs, due to issues such as the time needed for the evidence-gathering process involved in determining student eligibility, as well as the need to incorporate annual changes to processes. There also appear to be perceived issues of lack of fairness in the system, due to potential inequities in the availability of resources for identifying and implementing AAs, as well as problems relating to the assessment processes for determining eligibility, such as arbitrary cut-off scores in assessments (e.g., McLoughlin, 2015: Kettler, 2015: Woods, 2007: Dunford, 2019), and assumptions, such as that 25% extra time will be appropriate (Duncan & Purcell, 2017). It has been highlighted that there are potential issues with standardisation of tests (e.g., Smythe, 2014), as well as with assessor qualifications due to varying qualifying criteria in the training routes currently available (McMurray et al., 2017).
Research looking into which AAs or combination of AAs, are effective for different conditions seems to be lacking (Tyrell & Woods, 2018; Sokal & Vermette, 2017), and researchers have highlighted the need for engaging stakeholders in the process of AA. The issues raised above were explored in the current research, and the methods for doing this are outlined in the final section, after an outline of the theoretical framework used in the study.

1.6 The Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (2005) was employed as the theoretical framework for examining the issues raised in the research. Bronfenbrenner's theory is a developmental psychological theory which looks at the impact of the environment on the development of a child over time. Bronfenbrenner's model emphasises the complexity of development in relation to a system of outside factors that affect the development of a child. The model encompasses the immediate context of the developing person and then the wider social settings, exploring the constant interconnectivity of these relationships. It was chosen because it puts the child/student at its centre; it looks at the developing ecology around the child (Bronfenbrenner,1975), thus making it a suitable framework when discussing the AA system and its processes and how they impact on the student. The student focus model is currently at the heart of most educational practice in the UK, for example, the SEND Code of Practice (2015), Ofsted Inspection and ISI Inspections are all about students' achievement and the factors that support achievement. The model was used as a lens through which to view the issues resulting from the AA system and practices. The model is conceptualised as concentric rings of influence that surround the student at its centre (please refer to Figure 1).

Figure 1

Bronfenbrenner Bioecological Model (2005)
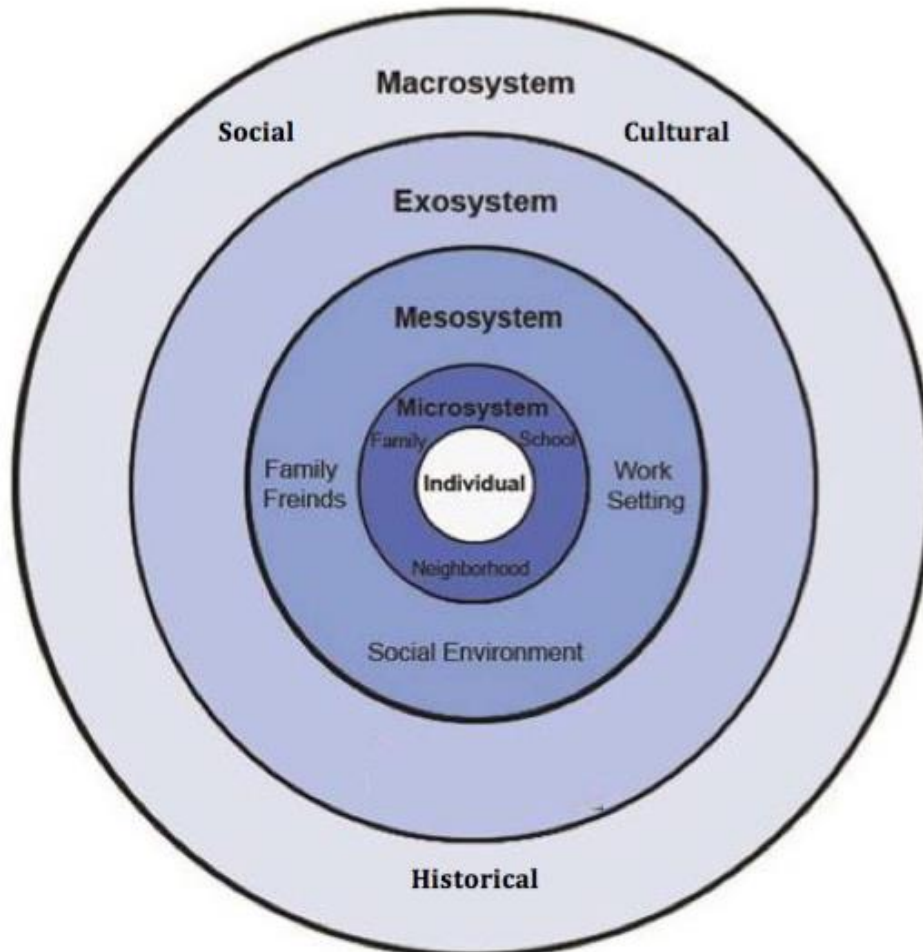
Bronfenbrenner's proposed layers of environmental interactions around a child, representing what he termed the *microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem*. The *Microsystem* refers to the influences in the child's immediate environment, such as the home, school, and workplace. The *Mesosystem* represents the interrelationships among the main influences (home, school, etc.) on the developing person at a point in time. The *Exosystem* encompasses relations among social structures that may not directly involve the child, but which can ultimately have an effect on them (e.g., parent losing their job). On top of these are the *Macrosystems*. These are the cultures or subcultures that set the pattern for structures and activities within the society that the developing

person inhabits; for example, laws, regulations, and rules that govern that society.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) considered the experiences of the child/adult and the impact on their development as shaped by their environment at successive stages of life (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Feelings experienced by the child, both positive and negative, can contribute to shaping the future development of that child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). It is important to consider this when discussing the AA process, as students with SpLDs may have been positively or negatively affected by the process, and their interactions with it over their lifetime at school.

Within the present research, the student's S*upport Network* (school, parents, friends, teachers and SEND professionals) can be thought of as the *Microsystems* of Bronfenbrenner's model*.* The *Professional Organisations* including the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), the body that regulates AAs for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS) and SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) are the agencies that have an effect on how teachers, SEND professionals and schools implement and administer AA. They can therefore be considered to be the equivalent of the *Mesosystem* of Bronfenbrenner's model. Government policies and parliamentary acts that affect how students with disabilities must be treated can be considered to be the equivalent of the *Macrosystem* in Bronfenbrenner's model.

The next section outlines the systems and processes that affect delivery of AA to a student with a SpLD in relation to the theoretical framework. The section begins by exploring the Microsystem, which encompasses the student's immediate support network. It will then cover the Mesosystem, which comprises the SpLD professional organisations and the JCQ. The Macrosystem will be explored by looking at government policies that have affected AA.

1.6.1 Microsystems – Support Networks
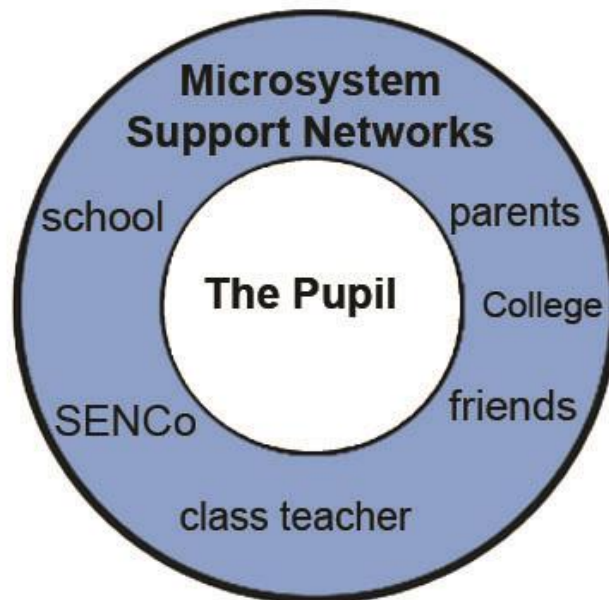
At the heart of model is the student and their support network. These encompass the student's immediate setting - home, family, friends, school/college, teachers (both classroom and SpLD) and SEND professionals. All these elements form part of a student's life and shape their development. In the following we examine how the SEND professionals and the school/college interact to provide AA for students.

1.6.1.1 AA and the Student's Support Network

SEND professionals in secondary school or FE colleges must determine the most appropriate AA to suit an individual's particular need. This requires them to know the student well, to understand their history of need, liaise with classroom teachers and, finally, to determine the correct AA for individual

exams. Students will need opportunities to practise their arrangements to make sure they are suitable before taking public examinations. SEND professionals need to interact with the student's parents/guardians and explain the process to them, how they will be implemented, and what impact they may have on their child. It is evident that the Support Networks encompasses some quite complex interactions, which, if not synergistic may lead to students not receiving the necessary support. In addition to this, some schools/colleges may not have a SENCO or SEND team that are trained in special education.

1.6.1.2 SEND Professionals

Within the *Support Network* the AA process involves qualified SEND professionals, identifying an individual's SpLD(s) and applying for AA in public examinations. In order to apply for these arrangements, a series of steps must be undertaken to provide evidence for a student's eligibility. First, a history of need must be established to initiate an investigation into a student's difficulties. This may be instigated by a teacher's or parental/carer concern about a student not performing to their ability, or even by the student. Secondly, standardised testing is conducted to see if there is evidence to support the need (see Section 1.5.2). Thirdly, evidence of the student's need for AA must be obtained from his/her teachers. Fourthly, the SENCO completes the JCQ documentation, outlining the student's history of need, the AA applied for, the normal way of working in the centre, results of the standardised testing, and the assessor's signature and qualifications. The SENCO or specialist teacher within the centre can then apply for AA online. The application is processed by the SENCO or specialist teacher and once it is approved, the exam boards are notified that the student is eligible for AA according to the current JCQ guidelines. After the process has been completed the SENCO or specialist teacher must then advise the student, parents, and teachers of the outcome, and all involved must then work towards supporting the AA, to enable the arrangements to become the student's *normal way of working.*

Availability and level of qualifications/experience of SEND professionals in a school will have an impact on how the school delivers AA. In a recent study,

Williams (2017) interviewed four SENCOs from different secondary schools. Questions focused on "gaining descriptions of the overall management of AA, particularly focused upon ET (extra time), readers and word processor arrangements, as well as their professional opinions about the effectiveness of the current provision" (Williams, 2017, p.28-29).

The interviews revealed variation in provision of AA amongst the four SENCOs. For example, there were differences in the way they accommodated reading support during an exam. One SENCO had a reader between two students, but in the main exam this would rise to three or four; some were in a small room environment and some had the opportunity to use reader pens. Williams concluded that the differences were due to a combination of the SEND team's knowledge of the system, school procedures and limited resources. Williams' study is based on a small sample size but within this sample inconsistencies in practice were evident.

1.6.1.3 The School

Another aspect of the Support Network that can affect AA is the school's policy and ability to resource AA. For example, schools may have limited IT equipment, spare rooms or staff for those who need a human reader, or a scribe. Williams (2017), as a result of his study on four senior schools cited above, stated "resource capacity restrictions combined with rising numbers of students being entitled to AA mean that the arrangements are sometimes below the standards desired by SENCOS" (2017, p.52). As noted in Section 1.5.1 the surveys of Woods (2007) and Woods et al. (2018) revealed that respondents felt that resources can be an obstacle for AA.

1.6.2 Mesosystems – Professional Organisations
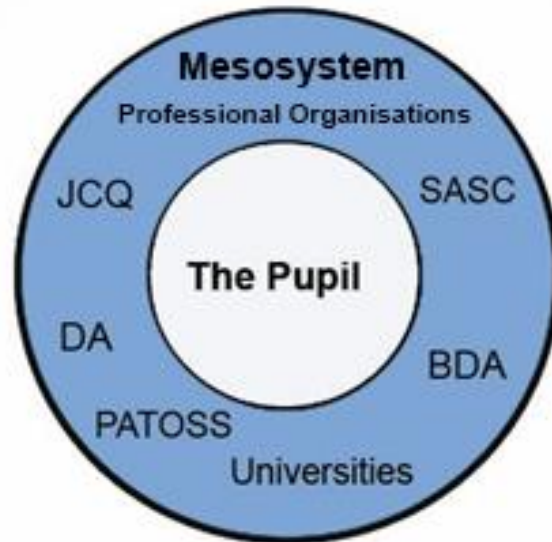
This section will explore the professional organisations that support SEND professionals in their work with AA in terms of training and assessment. It is also the sphere that encompasses the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) which guides these organisations.

1.6.2.1 The Specialist SpLD Organisations

The specialist organisations that cover SpLD are the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), The Professional Association for Teachers and Assessors of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS), Dyslexia Action, National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN), Communicate-ed, the SpLD Assessment Standard Committee and National Association of Special Educational Needs. These organisations provide guidance to SEND professionals on teaching practice, continuing professional development courses, and training for assessment.

As outlined in Section 1.5.3 to be an assessor for AAs a Level 7 qualification in SEND or the equivalent, such as Communicate-ed's Postgraduate Award of Proficiency in Assessment for Access Arrangements or PATOSS's Assessment for Access Arrangements (AAA) SpLD must be held. In addition, the Assessment Practising Certificate which is currently only accredited by the British Dyslexia Association, PATOSS and Dyslexia Action, allows assessors to assess for the Disabled Students' Allowance for those SEND students continuing their education at university or college.

Guiding the assessment process, the professional organisations are directed by SpLD Assessment Standard Committee (SASC) regarding national standards for assessment practice and report writing. In addition, SASC have a list of assessors who hold a current Assessment Practising Certificate. Also, SASC stipulate which assessments specialist assessors are allowed to use to diagnose SpLDs[xi].

An important aspect to consider regarding testing is the criteria for the diagnosis of an SpLD. Researchers disagree about the criteria for conditions; therefore, assessors have to be cautious about labelling conditions on the basis of the results of their tests. For example, Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) say "the field has been unable to produce a universally accepted definition [of dyslexia] that is not imprecise, amorphous, or difficult to operationalise" (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014, p.5). In May 2012 it was decided by the American Psychiatric Association that a change in terminology was needed. The new term Specific Learning Disorder was to encompass the various named types of learning disorder including dyslexia (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014. p.8). This allows clinicians to determine which sub-skill is impaired rather than providing a specific label, such as dyslexia which could mean issues with reading, memory and writing.

However, there are still organisations that use specific definitions of dyslexia, such as the British Dyslexia Association, who use the definition from the Rose Review (2009) and the British Psychological Society[5] who have their own definition.

1.6.2.2 The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)

The most important organisation that impinges on AAs is the JCQ. The JCQ acts on behalf of eight large qualification providers in the UK offering GCSE and GCE examinations and vocational qualifications. In addition, there are other awarding bodies that provide qualifications, such as the Cambridge International Examinations. They stipulate how public examinations should be conducted and how AAs are enforced in these examinations. The JCQ provides yearly updates to their AA documentation and it is down to individual schools, exam centres, examination officers, and SEND professionals to make sure they are up-to-date with the changing regulations. Updates/changes are posted on the JCQ website and various special needs providers hold annual conferences to update professionals involved with public examinations about the current guidelines and recent changes the JCQ make to AAs.

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[5] Dyslexia, Literacy and Psychological Assessment: Report by a Working Party of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology of The British Psychological Society 1999.
"Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the 'word level' (reading a word with no cues from any context in a sentence, no pictures, etc.) and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching."

1.6.3 Macrosystems – Government Policies

Macrosystem
Government policies

The Rose Report 2009

The Pupil

Equality Act 2010

Children & Families Act 2014
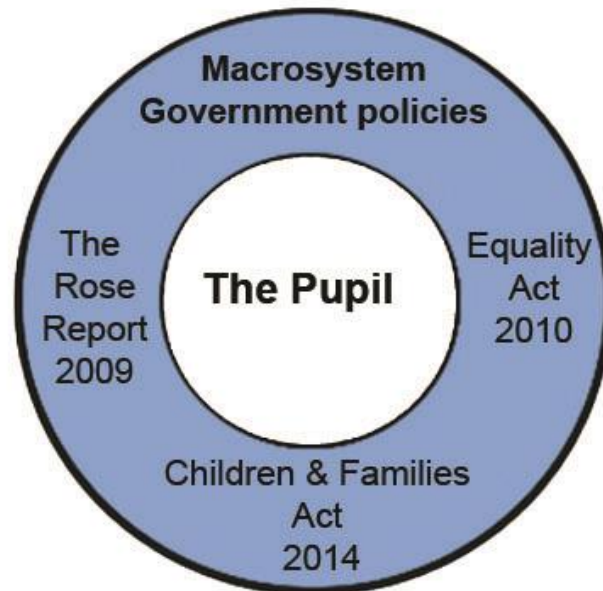
As outlined in Section 1.3 government policies, since the early 1980s, have influenced the development of AA. Legislation has been passed to enshrine the rights of students with SEND in law. However, there are differences in how relevant bodies, such as local authorities interpret the law, which can impact on resources available for AA.

1.7 Summary

The *Literature Review* has investigated the history of AA and its development into the system we currently have in the UK. It is a system based on providing fair access to students who have SEND, under the Equality Act 2010, when taking public examinations. The system is designed to remove barriers, to create a level playing field for students with SEND. The review has indicated a

number of problematic issues with the current system, providing evidence that suggests that this system may not be fit for purpose due to its complexity and shifting criteria.

Research suggests that the AA system is manageable as long as the setting is well resourced with sufficient specialist teachers, facilities and equipment. The studies of Woods (2007) and Woods et al. (2018) indicated that resources restrict provision. Woods states, "AA should be needs-led rather than resources-led" (2018, p.248). The variance in centre resources suggests that students may not be receiving a uniform service when it comes to assessing and implementing AA.

One of the main issues with the manageability of the system, that was cited, was the annual changes made by the JCQ to requirements, for example the recent change regarding who is eligible for a reader in a public examination. Section 7.1 reported on the annual changes the JCQ imposes on centres. Changes have to be implemented from the 1st of September each year. The changes to processes take time for SENCOs, and lack of time is a factor that is affecting their role, as evidenced by the recent Bath Spa Survey (Curran, Moloney, Heavy, & Boddison, 2018). 74% of the 1900 respondents in the survey stated that they do not have enough time to ensure that all students with SEND are able to access the provision they need (Curran et al. 2018, p.6). It is the SENCO's responsibility in the centre to assess, apply for and implement AAs, however, AA is just one part of a SENCO's remit. AA diverts time needed for other important areas of the position.

The literature has questioned the evidence-base supporting the AA system (McLoughlin, 2015: Lovett, 2011). It would appear that extra time of 25% and 50% are based on conventions (McLoughlin, 2015; Duncan & Purcell, 2017). According to the JCQ (2019-2020) a standardised score of 84 or less in a processing task, in conjunction with teacher-based evidence demonstrating a student's need, should result in the award of 25% extra time in the UK. To be awarded 50% extra time in the UK two test scores in different areas of processing of 69 or below are required. However, as Duncan and Purcell (2017)

point out there is "a lack of empirical evidence … that justifies the calculation of 25% extra time specifically (as opposed to an alternative percentage of extra time)" (2017, p.8).

There is an issue with the validity and reliability of the tests used to award AA. Many of the tests used have been standardised on an American population and not on a British one (Smythe, 2014). Two of the most popular British based tests, the DASH 17+ freewriting and the Adult Reading Test 2 were standardised with small sample sizes, bringing reliability and validity into question. Some of the tests recommended for AA have not been re-standardised over time, such as the *Symbol Digit Modality Test* (Smith, 1973), which suggests that the scores may no longer be valid when the assessments are being used to support an AA award.

The literature has revealed issues with the quality assurance for the training of AA assessors. Some have brought into question the qualifications currently available for becoming an AA assessor. There are now a variety of training routes available to become an AA assessor, from those provided by private organisations, such as Real Training, to courses offered by the professional SpLD organisations, such as PATOSS and Communicate-ed. The JCQ stipulates that an assessor must have completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7 with 100 hours of individual assessment (JCQ AA Manual, 2018-19, p.82). McMurray et al. (2017) believe that courses that claim to provide a Level 7 equivalent are misleading and that the JCQ should cease using this description. A Level 7 requires 600 hours' worth of study and usually takes one academic year to complete. The new JCQ approved courses do not provide this level of study or take this length of time to complete. Discrepancies in course content and length may lead to inequities in the way SENCOs or specialist assessors in centres handle AA and provision for students with SpLDs.

More research is needed to see what AA or a combination of AAs, may best remove barriers for students with different learning difficulties. In addition, there is a lack of engagement with the students themselves to discover what is best

for them when taking public examinations (Woods, 2010). Woods (2007) notes, "the academic literature reveals a dearth of research evidence on the assessment needs of students, both with and without special educational needs." (Woods, 2007, p.90).

1.8 The Present Study

The literature review revealed that educational professionals involved in implementing AAs are concerned about many aspects of this process. A survey was designed to gather views of SEND professionals around the country to see how they dealt with assessing, implementing and providing for AA for students in their centres. The survey also gathered views on continuing professional development (CPD) to gather more information on training, as the literature review has revealed issues with the quality assurance of assessor training. This has been recognised by the recent JCQ interim progress report in response to the *Independent Commission on Malpractice Report* (Dunford, 2019) where they have recognised that there are issues with CPD and also with training provision. There is now a debate as to whether the JCQ provide accreditation for third parties, or whether they provide the training themselves. Currently, it is third parties that update the JCQ training. The survey also gathered information about the evidence-base that supports AA by asking if the participants believe the extra time awards of 25% and 50% are supported by evidence-based research. It gathered information on the JCQ inspection process by asking participants how often they experienced an inspection both whole school and SEND, as the annual changes to the JCQ guidelines affect the inspection process and the paperwork required to be held by centres for each student. Respondents were also surveyed on the types of AA applied for. For example, 25% extra time, 50% extra time, reader or scribe. In addition to these questions, the survey asked the type of SEND each centre dealt with, the amount of staff allocated in each centre and the testing used by assessors to support an AA application.

Following the survey, interviews with SEND professionals were conducted to gain information on how they dealt with AA in their centre. The participants were

asked about how they came into the field of SpLD, their training routes, the CPD and the training they underwent to become an AA assessor, barriers to training, views on the JCQ inspection process, views on the manageability of the AA process in their centres and what improvements, if any, they believed could be made to the current process.

A third strand of the research addressed the lack of consultation with students that was indicated in the literature. This was addressed by a small-scale survey of stakeholder views from students, parents/guardians and SEND professionals on how students with dyslexia felt about AA. Again, the JCQ interim progress report in response to the *Independent Commission on Malpractice Report* (2019) recognises the need to improve communication with students and parents/guardians with regard to AA.

The following research questions were addressed.

Research Q1 – What are the existing practices for Access Arrangements in Secondary Schools and how do SEND professionals implement these arrangements?
Research Q1 was answered by information from the SEND professionals' Survey and the interviews.
Research Q2 – How effective do SEND professionals think the current systems and practices are for AA?
Research Q2 was addressed by means of the survey and interviews with SEND professionals about issues raised in the SEND professionals' survey to ascertain their current practices and views on the system. Effectiveness refers to how successful this system is at delivering AA to students who meet the eligibility criteria. It will investigate if the system is fit for purpose in terms of identifying students who need AA and the process of implementation.
Research Q3 –How do SENCOs interpret the guidelines for students with specific reading difficulties? What are the views of students who have AA for their reading issue and the views of parents/guardians who have children with reading difficulties?

Research Q3 involved a small-scale survey of stakeholders in secondary schools which investigated how AA removes barriers to support students with reading difficulties.

The research questions were designed to gather further information on the manageability of the current AA system for centres across the UK. This extended the work by Woods (2007) and Woods et al. (2018) to investigate whether SEND professionals believe this system to be unmanageable, and to gain insight on how to change this situation, if participants believed this to be the case. The research considered how individual centres manage the complex and shifting criteria for applying for AA by how they address aspects of important JCQ paperwork, such as Form 8, investigating how centres use resources and how they keep abreast of CPD. The study also examined the qualifications of SEND professionals in centres across the UK to gather data on the different routes available to become an AA assessor. Research into assessment qualifications has previously been looked at by Bell (2013) and McMurray et al. (2017). It also investigated the tests used by centres to support an AA application. This aspect of the study is novel. The most popular tests that centres use were investigated in terms of their validity and reliability on a UK population. The research also explored the extra time awards of 25% and 50% to understand the evidence-base that supports these awards. Finally, the reading study captures the views of parents, students and SENCOs on the current AA system. This aspect of the study should add further to the existing, but limited studies on how specific AAs remove barriers to support students with SpLDs, in this case, dyslexia.

The data gathered from the three strands of the study should provide a comprehensive view of the current AA system in UK. The data is assembled from SEND professionals around the country and seeks to include all stakeholders involved in the AA process, from specialist teachers/assessors to students and their parents/guardians. It is anticipated that the data will provide insight and possible paths forward to make the system more manageable for those who administer and implement it; more accessible for those who would benefit from it; and fairer for those who are awarded it.

2. Strand One – The SEND Professionals' Survey

2.1 Aims

The SEND Professionals' Survey was designed to gather views of current AA practices from SEND professionals who work in Secondary schools and Further Education Colleges (FE). A questionnaire was used to gather these views as it was considered to be the most effective way to gain data from a targeted and wide audience around the UK. Robson (2011) believes a questionnaire gives a snapshot of a situation at a particular time and this is indeed what was hoped for. The survey was designed to answer Research Question One - What are the existing practices for AA in Secondary schools and how do SEND professionals implement these arrangements?

2.2 Expectations drawn from the literature

The *Literature Review* highlighted areas that need further exploration. These include manageability of the current AA system, the rationale behind it, the training needed to become an AA assessor and understanding how students respond to the AAs they are awarded.

The JCQ annual changes and inspection regime need further investigation, as research suggests that these increase the administrative burden of AA in centres (Woods, 2007; Woods et al., 2018; Dunford, 2019). Centres often have to change their practices and paperwork as a result of annual changes; the JCQ inspections are supposed to regulate these changes. SENCOs are responsible for implementing the annual amendments and their workload is already significant, as evidenced by Curran et al.'s (2018) survey looking at the impact of SENCO workload. One of their findings was that 74% of SENCOs stated that they do not have enough time to ensure that students with SEN can access the provision they need. AA is just one aspect of a SENCO's job. Hipkiss (2018), in her thesis on devising a protocol for the management of AA, recommended that an AA administrator was needed to help coordinate all the documentation needed for AA. Employing additional staff for this role may be too much of a financial burden for many centres to contemplate. The manageability of AA

depends on how well-resourced centres are, in terms of how many SEN teachers there are and assessors in the centre and what facilities are available, for example additional rooms for examinations and specialist equipment, such as the use of laptops. This suggests that there could be inequality in terms of provision for students with SEND across the country.

One major concern is the rationale behind the extra time awards. For example, 25% extra time seems to be based on a convention (McLoughlin, 2015), although there appears to be no empirical justification for use of this percentage of time (Lovett, 2011). Duncan and Purcell (2017) believe that 25% extra time has been devised for administrative purposes; 25% extra time is the most common AA (Ofqual, 2019), suggesting it is used for a range of SpLDs, but evidence is lacking to determine how much extra time, if any, benefits different SpLDs or a combination of SpLDs. Wadley and Liljequists' (2013) study on ADHD students who were given extra time suggests that extra time may not be the most beneficial AA for this group of students, as many of them did not use the extra time they were given. The nature of their condition may have meant that they would have benefitted more from having their own room to avoid being distracted. In addition, the studies covered in the *Literature Review* on extra time and SpLDs suggest, that even when given extra time, students with SpLDs do not perform as well as their TD counter parts.

Another area of concern is the assessment process. The recommended assessments used for AA have been questioned in terms of their validity and reliability for a UK population (Smythe, 2014). Many of the tests recommended by SASC are standardised in America. These tests may not necessarily represent the UK population in terms of cultural and linguistic experiences and therefore the scores may not be accurate.

The qualifications of AA assessors have also been highlighted. McMurray et al. (2017) questioned the different training routes available to become an AA assessor, believing that the JCQ should withdraw the phrase "equivalent to a Level 7" qualification when the training for the courses is different from that of a Level 7 Diploma in SpLD.

The SEND Professionals' Survey was designed to ascertain the current practices of SEND professionals when dealing with AA in Secondary schools and FE colleges in the UK. In the following section outlines of how the survey questions were designed.

2.3 Methods

2.3.1 Participants

Participants for the survey were recruited by contacting some of the specialist SpLD providers. In addition, a group with whom the researcher has links with, an association of independent school SENCOs, were also contacted, as were the researcher's personal contacts. They were given an electronic link to the survey which was achieved using Qualtrics.com. However, the majority of responses to the survey came from a large UK provider of training and CPD in SpLD. A 1000 copies of the paper-based version of the survey (please see Appendix 1 SEND Professionals' Survey) were distributed at update conferences, which were held in locations around England, Wales and Northern Ireland in September 2018. Of the 1000 copies the researcher received 520 paper-based responses from the conferences. The organisation was also conducting online training. Those attending the on-line training were given the electronic Qualtrics link to complete the survey. In addition, the electronic link was sent to contacts at two other organisations. 59 electronic responses were received.

The final data set comprised 513 responses; this was due to the fact that some of the paper-based questionnaires were not fully completed therefore they were excluded from analysis. The sample was from the twelve regions of the UK, (see Table 2), so that the views were not based on one area. It is interesting to note that there were participants who completed the questionnaire who had no qualifications; these participants would not be compliant under the current JCQ guidelines. Twelve percent, or 51 participants, said they had no qualifications, most relied on outside assessors to help them with AA. Furthermore, in terms of centre type, the majority of responses were from the maintained sector, 232 secondary schools and 58 FE colleges, as opposed to 133 independent

secondary schools. This means that the views from the maintained sector were represented, as the main educational provision for students in the UK.

Table 2

Survey Respondents According to UK Region

Regions	Number of Respondents
East Midlands	20
East of England	35
London	85
N. Ireland	6
North East	10
North West	63
Scotland	4
South East	107
South West	46
Wales	10
West Midlands	59
Yorkshire	52
Total	497

Note: Not all participants supplied their postal code or place of work, which is why the total in the table differs from that in the text

The data revealed that there was a large range in terms of Special Needs department sizes with regard to full-time, part-time, teaching assistants and administrative personal. The number of full-time SEN teachers ranged from 40 in a special school environment to zero. Part-time ranged from 30 in an inner London secondary school to zero, teaching assistants ranged from 80 in an FE college to zero, and administrative personnel ranged from 20 to zero.

Figure 2 Shows the age of the SEND professionals and the setting they work in. Many older SEND professionals work in both maintained and independent secondary schools and many are independent assessors.

Figure 2

Age of Respondents and Centre Type
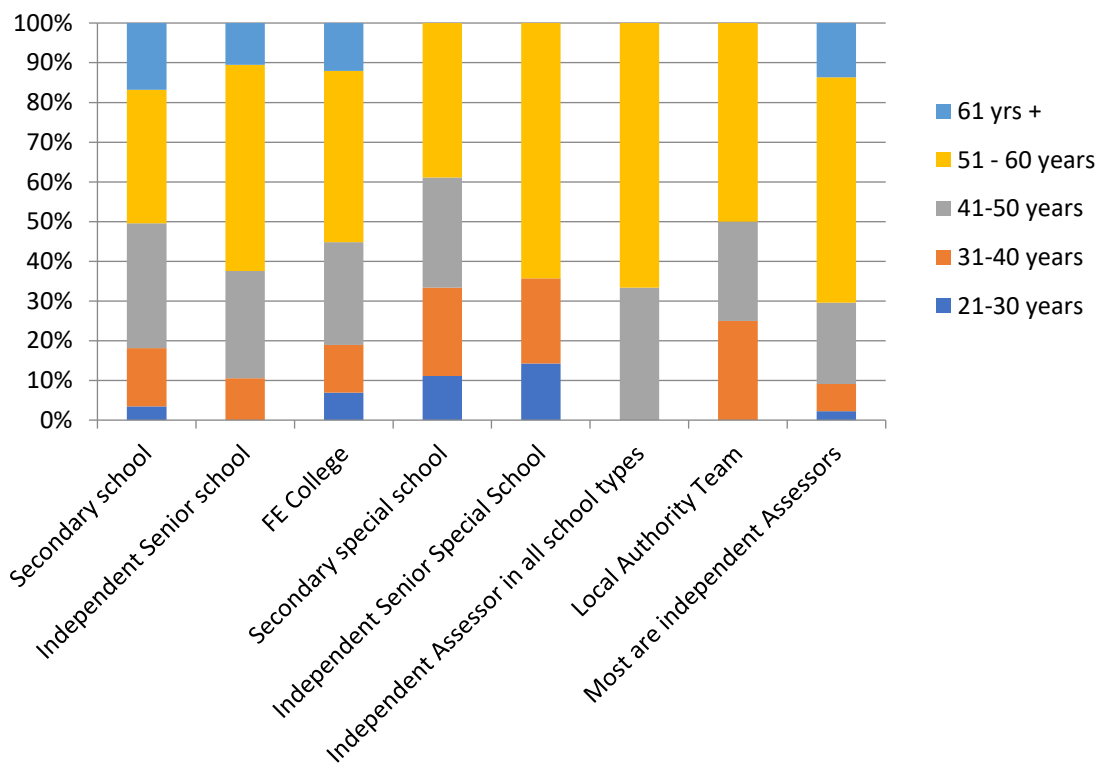
Table 3

Types of Respondents

Row Labels	Number of SENCOs	Number of Specialist Teachers	Number of Both - SENCO & Sp Teacher	Number of Independent Assessor
21-30 years	8	4	2	4
31-40 years	35	29	5	11
41-50 years	74	71	22	34
51 - 60 years	92	132	62	53
61 yrs +	14	34	14	28
Total	223	270	105	130

Table 3 shows that 270 of the respondents were specialist teachers, 223 were SENCOs and 130 were independent assessors. Those who were SENCOs and specialist teachers ranged in terms of years in the position from just starting to 32 years. The respondents ranged in age from 21-61+ years in age, Table 4 provides a summary of the age distribution of respondents. Most participants were from the 51-60 age group (43%) followed by the 41-50 age group (28%).

Table 4

Age Distribution of Survey Respondents

Age	Percentage of Respondents
21-30 years	3.34%
31-40 years	12.97%
41-50 years	27.90%
51 - 60 years	42.83%
61 yrs +	12.97%
Total	100.00%

56% of those who participated were over 51 years of age. 92% of those surveyed were female. Bell (2013) in her study on 75 teachers specialising in SpLD had 76% who were 40+ years, 24% were 50+ and 7% were under the age of 30 years (2013, p.107). 95% of Bell's participants were female, comparable with the percentage in the current study, and Bell also observed a smaller percentage of participants under 30 years.

2.3.2 Materials

A survey was used to ascertain the views of SEND professionals, as it was thought the most appropriate way to gain data from a wide selection of participants on many aspects of the AA system, from the twelve regions of the country.

The SEND Professionals' Survey was a questionnaire developed for the purposes of the study. It was made available in two formats, an electronic format, using Qualtrics software, which was distributed with an anonymous link, and a paper-based version. The questionnaire comprised 29 closed questions and three open questions.

The survey was designed to address Research Question 1 - What are the existing practices for AA in Secondary Schools and how do SEND professionals implement these arrangements? Questions 1 to 3 referred to demographic detail of the participants. Questions 4 to 8 asked about the participants'

school/centre and SEND register. Questions 9 to 16 asked about the participants' role and qualifications. Questions 17 to 25 dealt with the paperwork participants produced for JCQ and AA applications. Questions 26 and 27 asked participants about JCQ inspections. Questions 28 to 30 asked about the assessments used, about participants' familiarity with the validity and reliability of the tests and if they agreed with students having extra time in examinations. Question 31 asked what specialist organisations participants contacted if they needed further guidance. Finally, participants were asked if they wished to be involved in an interview about AA.

2.3.2.1 Piloting the SEND Professionals' Questionnaire

The survey was initially piloted in June and July 2018 with *Group 86* and *Communicate-ed* members. Both organisations agreed to provide feedback to the pilot survey. Initially, the survey was titled the SENCO and Specialist Teachers' Survey. Members were sent the survey directly via email using the Qualtrics application. The pilot questionnaire consisted of 26 questions. Sixty-eight questionnaires were received from the *Group 86* and *Communicate-ed* members. Responses came from all over the country, there were also respondents from Spain and the Falkland Islands. In addition to the questionnaires, the researcher asked for feedback. Twenty-two replies were received providing feedback on the pilot questionnaire.

One of the main issues with the pilot questionnaire was the lack of representation from independent assessors. 32% of respondents noted that there was no option to describe their situation. The initial survey was going to be based on SENCOs and specialist teachers only, but this appeared to leave out the views of assessors who work in more than one school or college. One member commented

"I'm an independent assessor and would find it difficult to answer many of your questions that only a SENCo would have the data for, and therefore my lack of answers in some areas might make the whole of my response invalid."

Comments from assessors resulted in two changes to the questionnaire. One was redesigning Question 9 to encompass freelance assessors' views. Question 9 asked what positions participants held and this question was altered to include the option of independent assessor. The second change was to the name of the survey. It was changed from The SENCO and Specialist Teacher survey to the SEND Professionals' Survey to encompass free-lance assessors. Other adjustments following piloting included changing how personal data was asked for, and removing acronyms and out-of-date terminology, such as 'School Action'. Seven respondents noted that 'School Action', as a title, no longer existed. In addition, some of the questions were reworded to make them clearer. For example, Question 4 "How many students receive AA in your school?" was reworded to be more specific to "How many students receive AA in your school for GCSE and A-Level exams using *AA-online*?". This then gave data for the public examination years and gave an indication of who had *AA online*, as opposed to centre delegated AA, such as the use of a laptop or own room. Question 7 asked how many students received centre delegated AA.

2.3.2.2 Procedure

The revised questionnaire was distributed to organisations outlined in *Participants* in order to target SEND professionals involved with AA, who were SENCOs, specialist teachers or independent assessors. The Qualtrics link to the questionnaire was live between September and the end of December 2018, and a paper version was put into a thousand delegate packs that were distributed at the *Communicate-ed* AA update and refresher courses in September and October 2018. Delegates had the option of completing the electronic Qualtrics link as well.

2.3.3 Ethical Considerations

Before commencing the study, ethical approval was sought according to the UCL, Institute of Education ethical approval guidelines. Due to the recent General Data Protection Legislation (GDPR, May 2018), a new step for ethical approval was needed. The research not only had to be approved by the Department of Psychology, but also by the UCL Data Protection Registration

office. An approval number was granted for this research reference No Z6364106/2018/06/127. The research was conducted following the guidelines of the British Education Research Association (2018).

Anonymity of personal data was assured, and participants were asked to provide their details if they wished to take part in an interview. All the data was kept securely on the researcher's computer which was password protected and the respondent's paper-based surveys were kept in a locked cupboard in the researcher's office.

2.4   Results

The SEND Professionals' Survey consisted of 32 questions which related to issues identified in the *Literature Review*. The results are presented under six headings which best fit the areas identified in the review. The first section will look at the workload of SEND professionals. The second section will investigate the JCQ annual changes and inspection regimes in light of manageability issues. The third section will look at questions relating to the evidence-base behind the system. The fourth will look at questions relating to the tests used by assessors to assess for AA. The fifth section will look at the results pertaining to the most common AA awarded by SEND professionals. The final section will investigate the training and qualifications held by assessors.

2.4.1   The workload of SENCOs

Question 8 asked what SpLDs the centres dealt with, (see Figure 3). 481 respondents answered this question. The majority of issues that most SENCOs deal with are to do with Dyslexia, ADHD and ASD. Many SENCOs are dealing with a wide range of SpLDs. Dealing with this range of difficulties may possibly add to their workload.

Figure 3

Types of SpLDs Centres Support
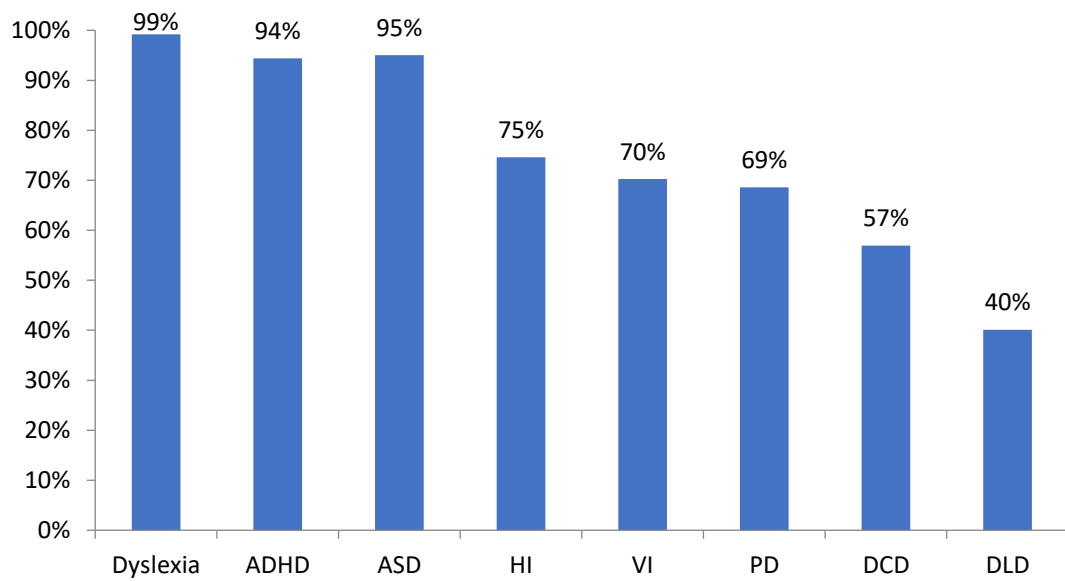
Note. ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, ASD = Autistic Spectrum Disorder, HI= Hearing Impairment, VI = Visual Impairment, PD = Physical Disability, DCD = Developmental Co-ordination Disorder, DLD = Developmental Language Disorder

Question 9 and 10 looked at the length of time SEND professionals had held their position and if they held more than one position in their centre. 259 respondents answered this question. Figures 4 and 5 asked about the positions that SENCOs hold in their school/college in addition to being a SENCO.

Figure 4

SENCOs and other Positions of Responsibility in Independent Schools
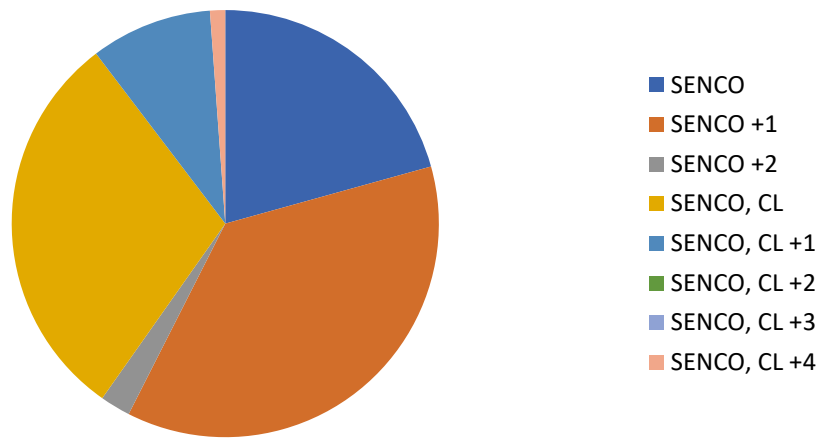
The responses revealed that in both the maintained and independent sector SENCOs were usually class teachers (CL) and they tended to do more just the SENCO role.

Respondents from the maintained sector reported that, in addition to the SENCO role, they held up to three other positions of responsibility; positions of responsibility are denoted by the numbers of the figures, for example, SENCO, CL + 2 would be SENCO, class teacher, plus two other positions of responsibility.

Independent sector SENCOs did not appear to hold as many additional responsibilities as their mainstream counterparts.

Figure 5

SENCOs and other Positions of Responsibility in Maintained Secondary Schools

- SENCO
- SENCO +1
- SENCO +2
- SENCO, CL
- SENCO, CL +1
- SENCO, CL +2
- SENCO, CL +3
- SENCO, CL +4
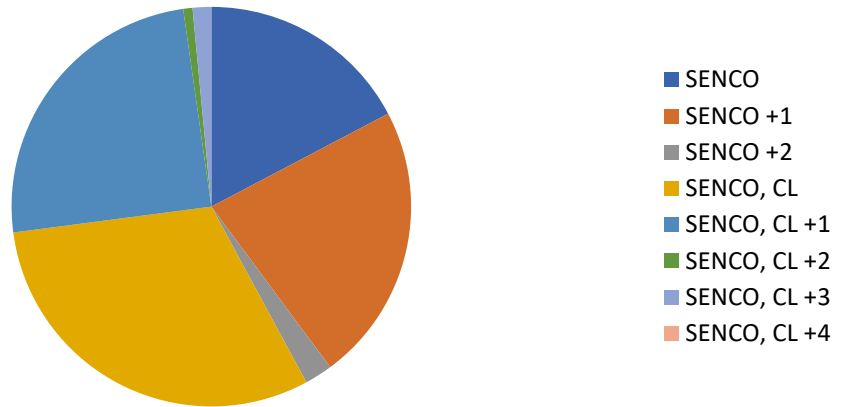
Question 18 asked how long respondents spent completing paperwork for AA. 441 respondents answered this question. Figure 6 shows that respondents in most centres spent between 1-3 hours completing paperwork. 127 respondents spent 1-3 hours, 125 respondents spent between 3-5 hours, 72 respondents spent 5-10 hours and 103 respondents spent over 10 hours compiling paperwork for AA. There appears to be some variation in how long centres spend on AA paperwork.

Figure 6

The Amount of Time to Complete AA Paperwork Per Student
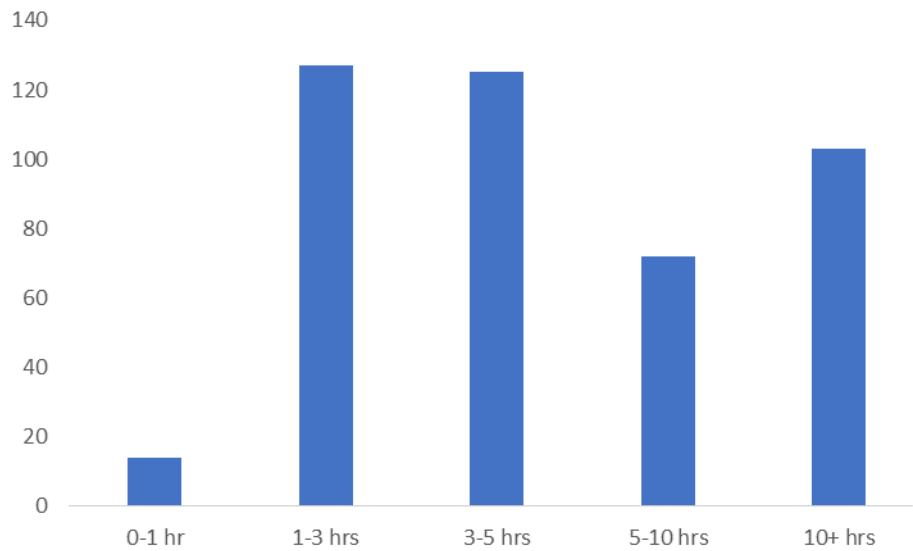
Question 19 asked how many pieces of evidence were collected to support AA. 365 respondents answered this question. Figure 7 suggests that most centres collect between two to four pieces of evidence. 286 respondents collected this amount of evidence as opposed to 79 collecting only one to two pieces. There does not appear to be a relationship between the qualifications held and the amount of evidence collected. (See Table 5). This possibly suggests that most respondents believe it is good practice to collect as much evidence as they can for an application.

Figure 7

Amount of Evidence Collected for AA
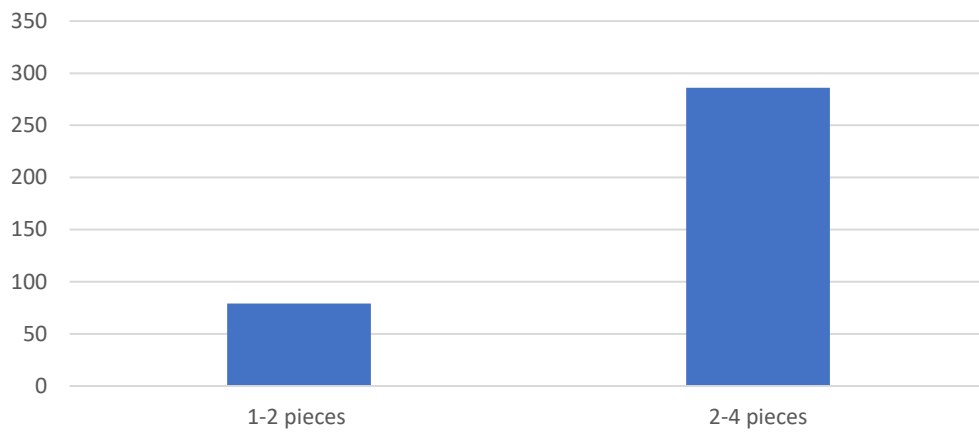
Table 5

Pieces of Evidence Collected for an AA Application according to Qualifications Held

Pieces of Evidence	Doctorate	Masters	Level 7	Specific JCQ qualification	Level 5	None
1-2	0	7	39	14	2	7
2-4	4	28	134	70	21	24

Question 20 asked respondents about the types of evidence they collect for an AA application. 408 participants responded to this question. Table 6 shows the types of evidence collected. The majority of evidence collected is teacher feedback and mock exam results. Collecting students' views was reported by only a small minority of respondents.

Table 6

Type of Evidence Collected to Support an AA Application

Type of Evidence to Support an Access Arrangement	Teacher feedback	Mock/ Exams	Standardised Testing-FORM8	Class work- NWW	Medical Evidence CAMHS, Medical, EP, OT, SALT	Centre devised questionnaires- SENCO-5conditions/ IEPS-passports/ learning plans	EHCP	Pupil's views	parental views
Number Using	313	218	166	155	134	102	44	18	17

Note: NWW = Normal Way of Working, EP = Educational Psychologist, OT = Occupational Therapist, SALT = Speech and Language Therapist, IEP = Individual Educational Plan, EHCP = Education, Health and Care Plan

2.4.2 The JCQ annual changes and inspections

Question 21 asked respondents how often they updated their knowledge on the JCQ guidelines for AA. 434 respondents answered this question. Question 22 asked how they updated their knowledge. The majority of respondents update their knowledge annually with regards to the JCQ guidelines usually by attending a face to face course on the updates.

Figure 8

How Often do SEND Professionals Update their Knowledge on the JCQ Regulations
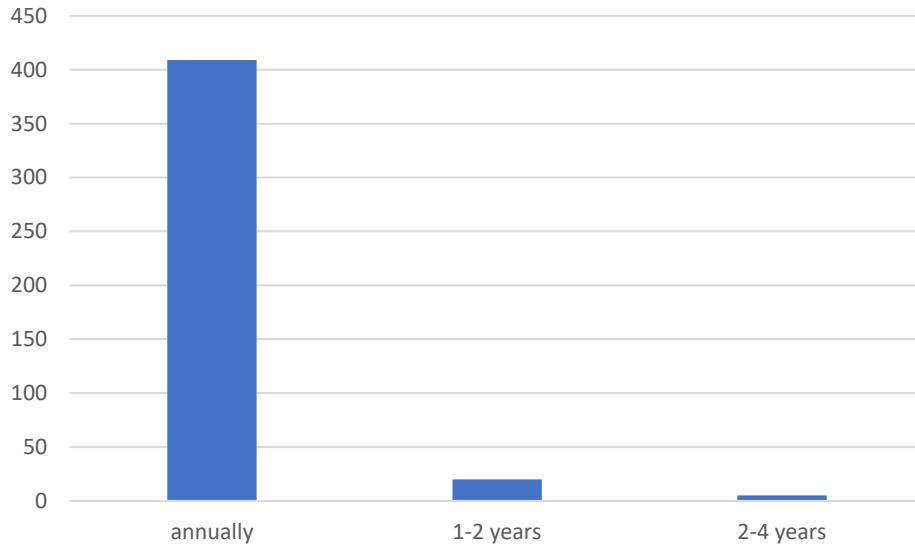
Table 7

JCQ Inspections – Whole School Exam Inspection

Types of Centre	Annually	1-2 years	2-3 years	Never Been Inspected	Total
FE College	29	3	4	2	38
Hospital school	1				1
Independent Assessor in all types of school	1				1
Independent Senior school	86	6	3	8	103
Independent Senior Special School	7	1	1	1	10
PRU- pupil referral unit	1				1
Secondary school	130	19	9	11	169
Secondary special school	12	1	1	1	15
Total	267	30	18	23	338

Questions 26 and 27 asked respondents about how often they were visited by JCQ inspectors and if they had a specific SEN inspection of their paperwork. Tables 7 and 8 outline these.

Table 8

JCQ Inspections – Specific SEND Inspection

Types of Centre	Annually	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	Never Been Inspected Separately from the Whole School Inspection	Total
FE College	18	2	2		10	32
Hospital school				1		1
Independent Assessor in all types of school					1	1
Independent Senior school	41	15	7	1	24	88
Independent Senior Special School	4	1			3	8
PRU- pupil referral unit	1					1
Secondary school	62	17	10		56	145
Secondary special school	7	1			3	11
Total	133	36	19	2	97	287

Although most centres in the sample are inspected annually, 23 centres have never had a JCQ inspection and some centres are only inspected every other year, or every two to three years.

The majority of respondents have never had a specific SEN inspection, rather their documentation is inspected during the whole school inspection.

In addition to this, the data was looked at regionally displayed in Figures 9 and 10. Table 9 provides the respondents per region so a comparison can be made in terms of numbers.

Table 9

Responses per Region

Regions	Respondents per Region
East Midlands	20
East of England	35
London	85
N. Ireland	6
North East	10
North West	63
Scotland	4
South East	107
South West	46
Wales	10
West Midlands	59
Yorkshire	52
Total	497

Figure 9

JCQ Inspection Data for Whole School Inspection Per Region
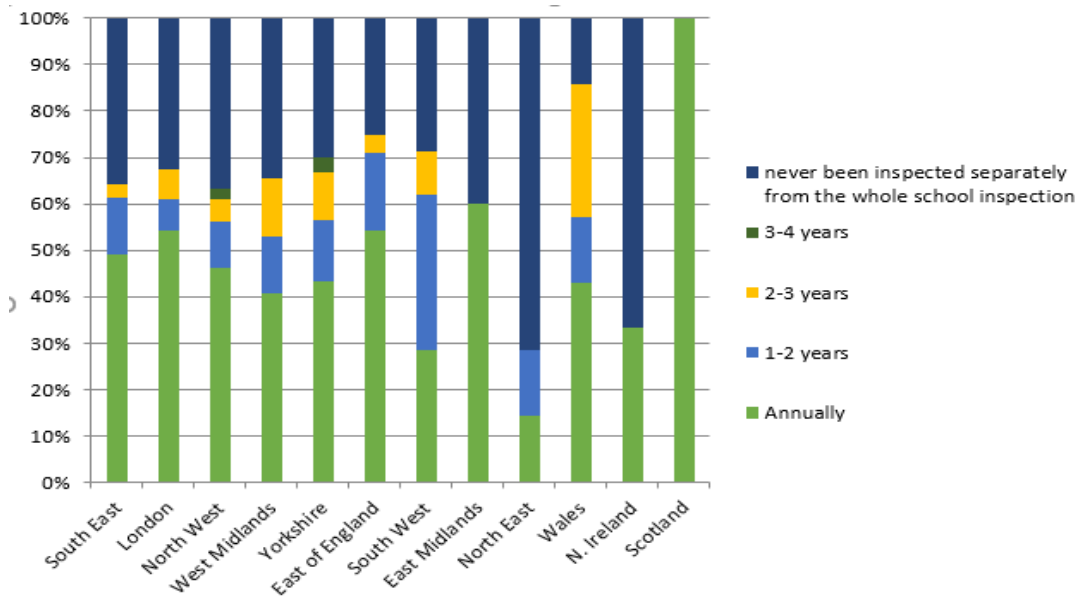
Figure 10

JCQ Inspection Data for Specific SEND Inspection Per Region
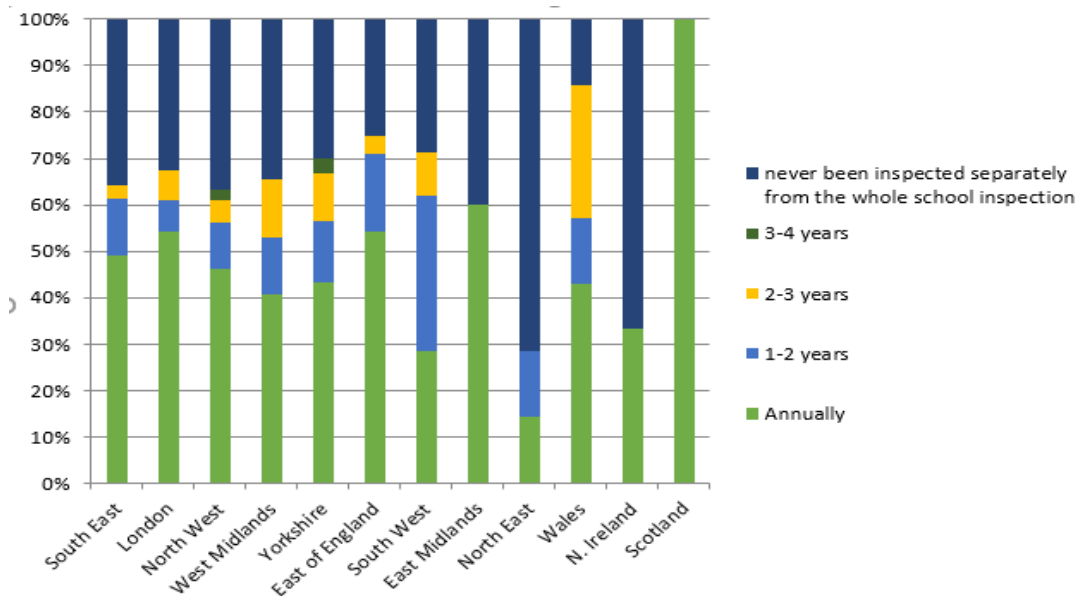
In the sample for the present study there were regional discrepancies in relation to JCQ inspections and the type of inspections SENCOs receive. The data also demonstrates that there are differences in terms of centre types, (see Figure 11), possibly suggesting that the independent sector is inspected more than the maintained.

Figure 11

Annual Whole School Inspections by the JCQ
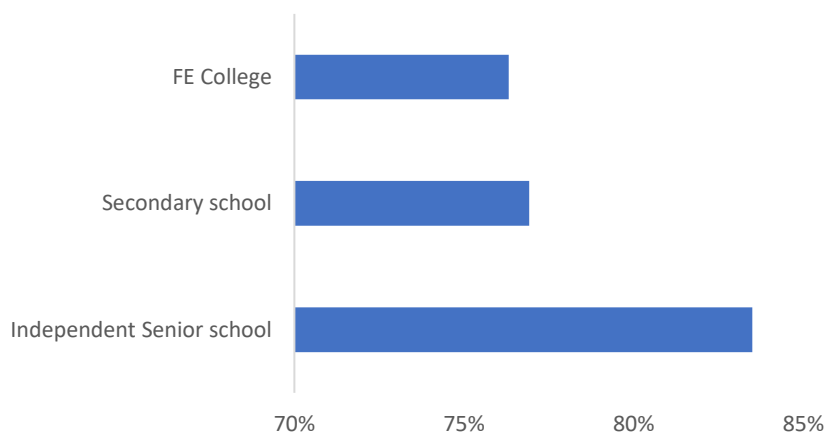
2.4.3 The evidence-base behind the extra time awards

Question 25 asked the participants if they believed the extra time awards of 25% and 50% are supported by evidence-based research. 466 participants responded to this question. 251 respondents do believe it is supported by evidence-based research; however, 215 respondents were either unsure or believe it is not.

Question 30 asked the participants if they agreed with students having extra time in public examinations, such as GCSE and A-Level. (See Figure 12). 486 respondents answered this question.

Figure 12

Illustrates how many SEND Professionals Agree to Students having Extra Time in Public Examinations.

■ definitely yes ■ probably yes ■ might or might not ■ probably not ■ definitely not
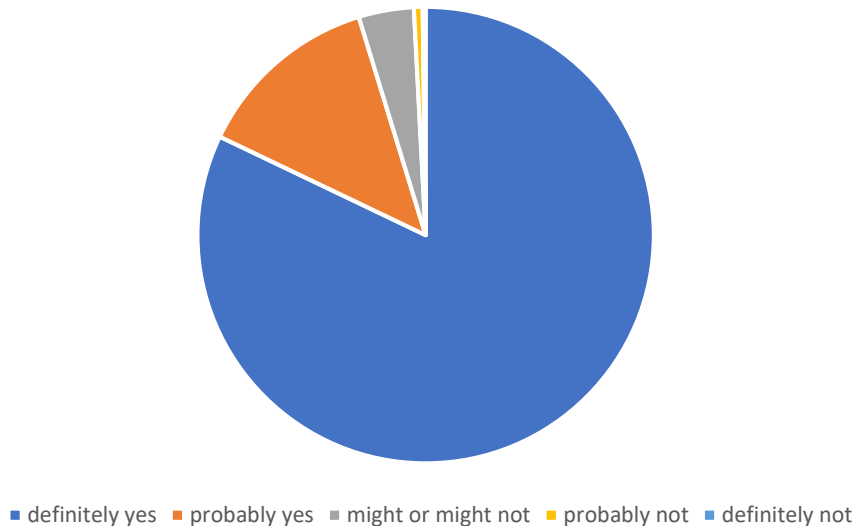
Most respondents agreed with students having extra time in public examinations.

2.4.4 The tests used by AA assessors and their validity and reliability

Question 28 asked which tests respondents most frequently used for AA. 419 people responded to this question by writing a list of the tests they used. Table 10 shows the data. Out of the top six most used tests, three of these are very quick to administer – CTOPP2, TOMAL2 and DASH as most assessors would use individual subtests from these. One of the tests is a computer-based test, Lucid Exact, and this test can only be used if the assessor sits next to the student when they complete it. Finally, the SDMT is a test that SASC has a proviso on and should not be used for AA. It should only be used to gain qualitative information on a student.

Table 10

Tests Used when Assessing for AA

Type of Test Used	Number Using it
DASH	317
CTOPP2	297
WRAT4/5	250
TOMAL2	160
Lucid Exact	137
SDMT	121
WIAT2/3	95
TOWRE2	86
GORT4/5	71
DRA	44
RAN/RAS	38
Adult Reading Test	38
Access Reading Test	32
YARC	24
Academic Achievement Battery -AAB	18
WRIT	17
Dyslexia Portfolio	12
NGRT/GSRT	12
Spelling tests incl. HADC/DIAGNOSTIC SPELLING TEST	11
TAPS	9
WRAML2	8
SWR TEST	8
BPVS	6
BERRY	6
Edinburgh	5
Hodder oral reading test	5
Vernon	4
KTEA-3- Kaufmann	4

WISC/WAIS	3
PHAB	3
SPARCS	3
SUFFOLK2	3
CATS	2
Accelerated Reader - star reading test	2
WRAML2	1
DAST- Dyslexia adult screening test	1
New computer reading test online	1
Word chains	1

Question 29 asked if the respondents were familiar with the validity and reliability of the tests used for AA. 463 respondents answered this question. Figure 13 provides responses on how familiar SEND Professionals are with the validity and reliability of the tests recommended for AA in terms of qualifications held.

Figure 13

Validity and Reliability in Terms of Qualifications held
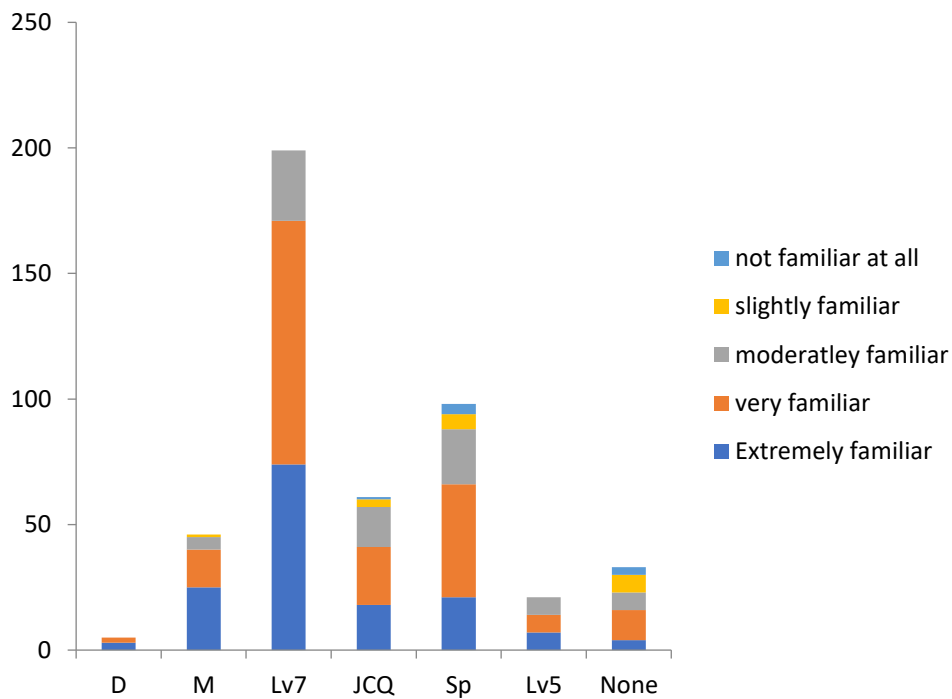
Note: D = Doctorate, M = Masters, Lv7 = Level 7 in SpLD,
JCQ = Equivalent to a Level 7, Sp = Specific SENCO qualification, Lv5 = Level 5 in SpLD

The majority of respondents are familiar, but there are some that are only moderately or slightly familiar with the validity and reliability of the tests used for AA.

Question 31 asked what organisations respondents consult when they require further knowledge about the tests used for AA. 425 respondents answered this question. A list of organisations was given and the respondents could choose more than one from the list. Table 11 provides the responses.

Table 11

The Organisations Consulted by SEND Professionals' when Requiring Further Knowledge about the Tests for AA

NASEN	PATOSS	Communicate-ed	DA	BDA	SENCO Forum	Ask a Colleague	The Institute you Trained at	SASC	Other
11%	58%	70%	4%	29%	27%	47%	11%	21%	11%

2.4.5. The most common AA awards

Question 23 asked about the most frequently applied for AA. Figures 14, 15, 16 and 17 give the most common types of AA applied for by SENCOs. They are 25% extra time, 50% extra time, a reader and a scribe. The data indicates that 25% is the most popular arrangement, this represents 86% (418) respondents. This confirms Ofqual figures for 2019. 61% (282) respondents said that the use of a reader was the second most applied for AA in their centre and 52% (233) respondents said a scribe was the third most common AA applied for in their centre.

Figure 14

418 Respondents said 25% Extra Time was the Most Common Applied for AA
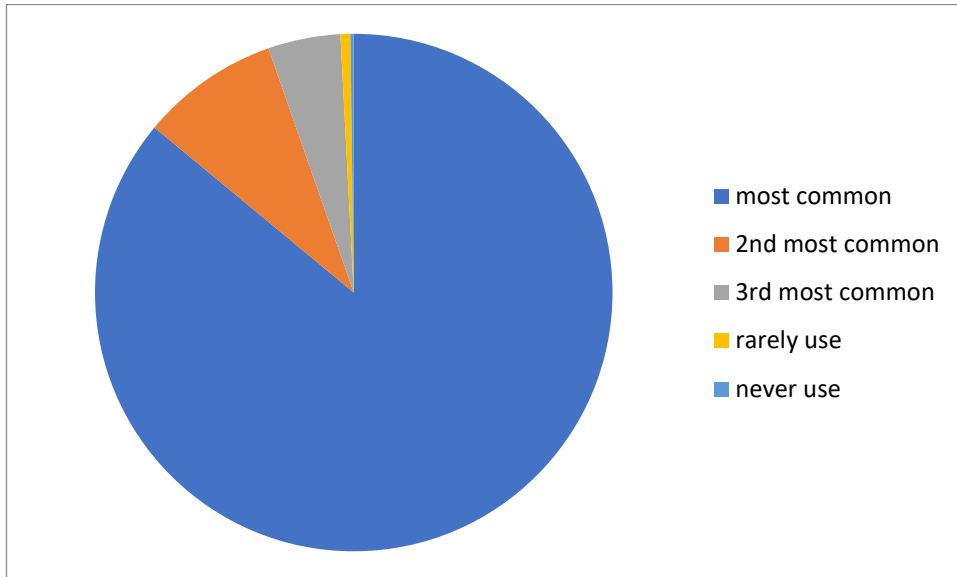
Figure 15

225 Respondents said 50% Extra Time was Rarely used when Applying for AA
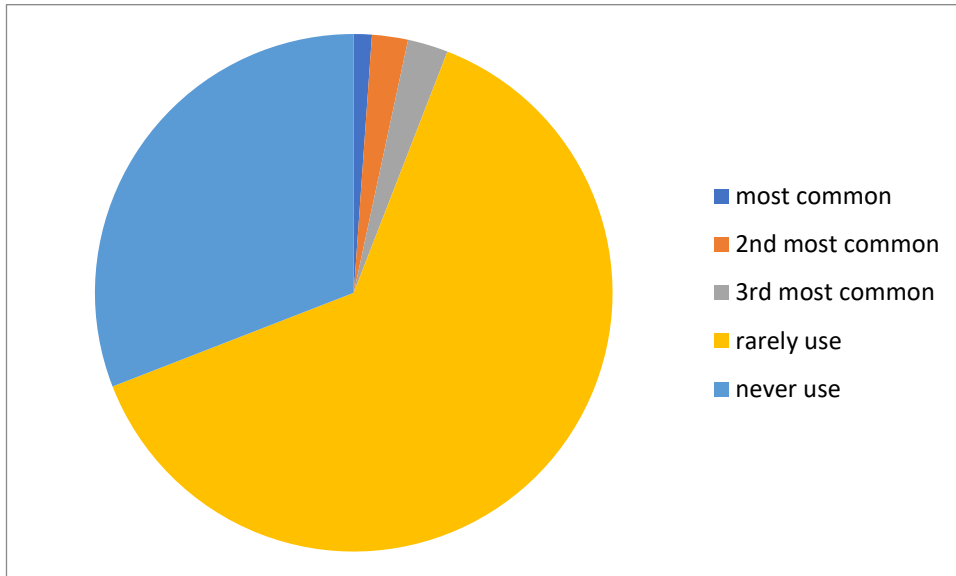
Figure 16

282 Respondents said the use of a Reader was the Second Most Common Applied for AA
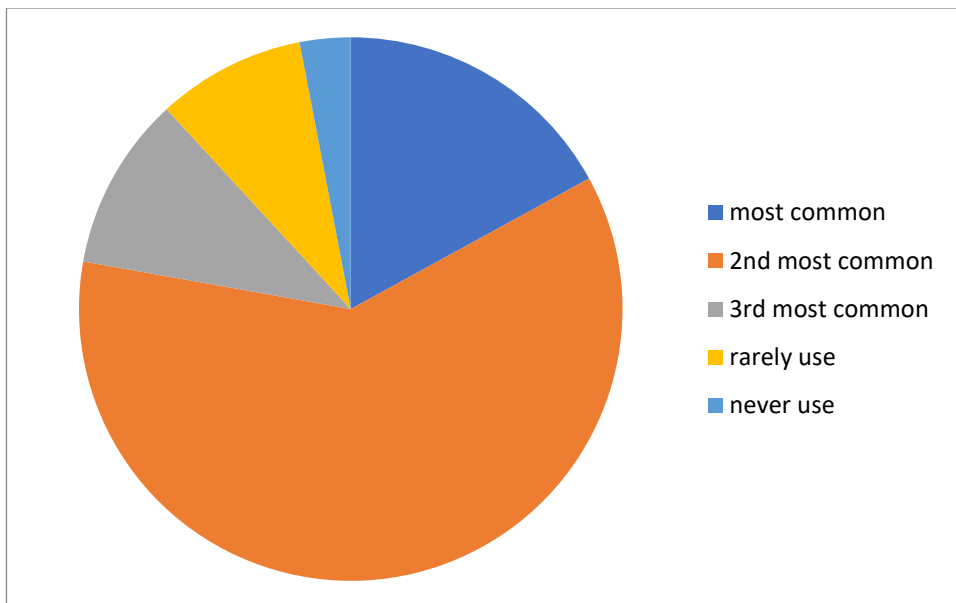
Figure 17

233 Respondents said the use of a Scribe was the Third Most Common Applied for AA
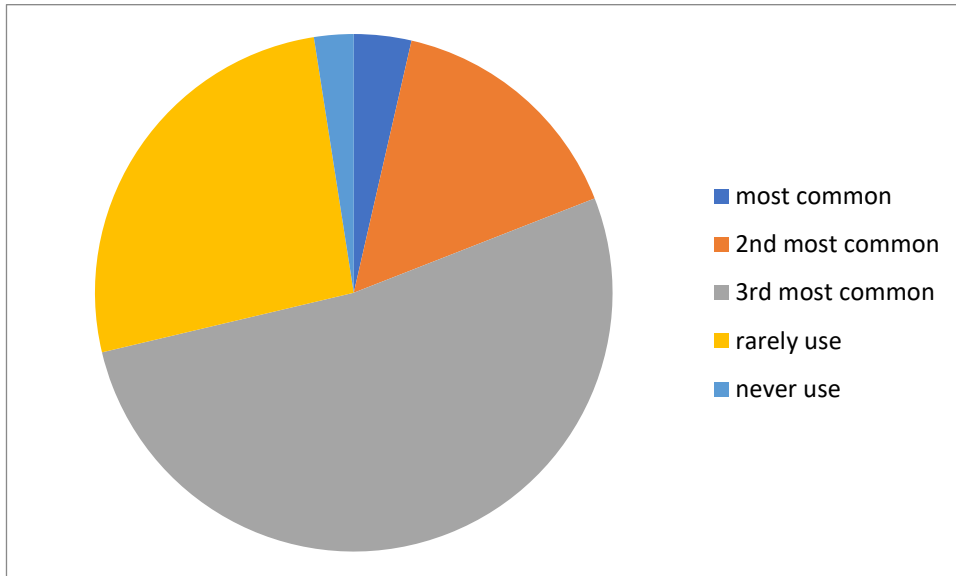
Question 24 asked respondents the reasons for applying for 50% extra time. 50% was applied for in the case of students with processing difficulties, complex physical and medical difficulties, visual impairment, ASD, cerebral palsy, and other issues. (See Table 12).

Table 12

The Reasons for Applying for 50% Extra Time

Reasons	Numbers
2 processing scores below 69	102
Complex medical and physical needs	55
Visual impairment	52
ASD	14
Cerebral Palsy	13
Complex learning difficulties	11
EHCP	7
Reader	5
Hearing impairment	3
OLM	2
Stutter in oral exams	1
Overseas candidate with evidence	1
Foreign language exam	1
OCD	1
Mental health issues	1

2.4.6 The training and qualifications of SEND Professionals'

Questions 12-14 investigated the SEND professionals' level of qualifications. The SEND professionals' qualifications were broken down into categories of Level 5, Level 7, JCQ, Specific SENCO qualification, APC, Masters and Doctorates. Figure 18 shows the data in terms of age groups. 513 respondents answered this question.

Figure 18

Qualifications According to Age Groups
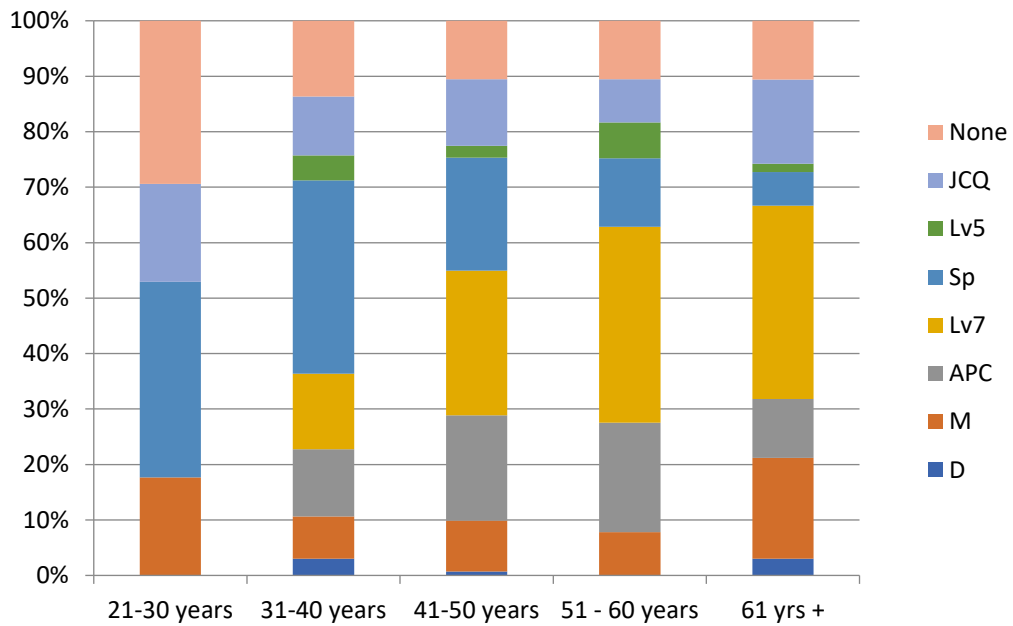
Figure 19 presents the same data in terms of independent and maintained senior schools. In the current sample the JCQ qualification and specific SENCO qualification are higher in respondents in the maintained sector than the independent. It is noteworthy that the more recent JCQ and Specific SEND qualifications are becoming more prevalent but that most still hold a Level 7 to assess.

Figure 19

Qualifications in terms of Maintained and Independent Schools
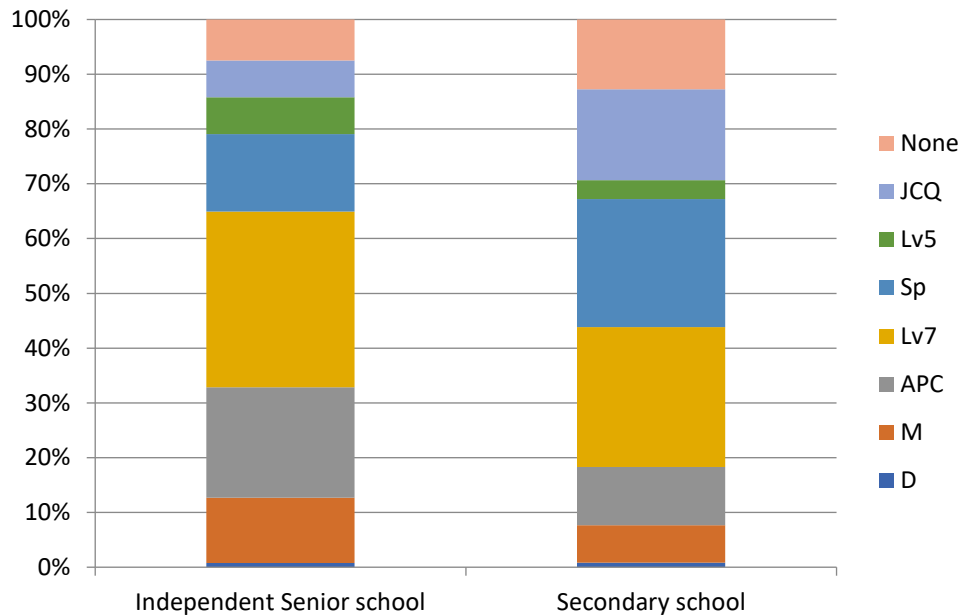
Questions 16 & 17 asked how many assessed in their department and if they used outside specialist assessors. The maximum number of assessors in one department was seven and that was from an independent senior school; however, many departments did not have anyone qualified to assess and relied on external assessors. Out of those surveyed 66% (338/513) said they used outside specialists. This indicates the need for outside specialists is great in order for most centres to be able to cope with the demands of AA. Table 13 demonstrates that, on average, the Independent sector has more qualified staff than their mainstream counterparts. FE Colleges appear to be well serviced by SEND professionals in their centres, but when you consider the size of most colleges, some servicing students with a population of 12,000 students, this figure is misleading.

Table 13

The Average Number of Qualified Staff to Assess for AA per Centre Type According to Percentage on the Centre's SEND Register

Centre Type	up to 5%	5-10%	Greater than 15%	Grand Total
FE College	1.5	1.8	3.1	2.3
Independent Senior school	1.3	1.6	1.5	1.6
Secondary school	0.9	1.2	1.0	1.1

2.5 Discussion

This section will discuss the issues arising from the data generated by the SEND professionals' survey. The issues will be discussed under the headings identified from the literature.

2.5.1 SENCO workloads

According to the survey responses most centres dealt with a vast array of SpLDs, the most common being Dyslexia, ADHD and ASD (see Figure 3, page 70). However, many centres also dealt with other difficulties, such as hearing impairment, physical disabilities, and developmental co-ordination difficulties. Providing for, and supporting this array of SpLDs and disabilities, adds to a SENCO's workload, as many outside agencies would also be involved in making sure these pupils were provided with the right equipment and specialist support. Liaising with these outside agencies would fall under the SENCO's remit. What is noteworthy from the responses is the lack of identification of students with DLD, while approximately 7% of the

population is reported to have issues with DLD. This may be because this SpLD has had name changes over the past years and it was only in 2016 that Bishop et al. changed the name and outlined the criteria for this definition. Many of the SpLD agencies do not provide information on DLD.

Respondents in the survey who were from the maintained sector reported more additional responsibilities on top of their SENCO role than respondents from the independent sector. (See Figures 4 and 5 on pages 71 and 72) Many were class teachers, pastoral leaders and Designated Safeguard Leads. As revealed in the Curran et al. study (2018) in the Literature Review, the position of a SENCO is full-time; adding on other positions of responsibility will erode the time needed to dedicate to the ever-increasing workload of this position. Respondents to the survey also highlighted discrepancies in practice, which may affect a SENCO's workload. For example, when respondents were asked how many hours they spent per student on an AA application and the evidence collected for an application, discrepancies in responses were evident. (See Figures 6 and 7 on page 73 and 74.) 23% of those surveyed spent over 10 hours per student's application for AA, 16% spent 5-10 hours, 29% spent 1-3 hours and 28% spent 3-5 hours, whereas, *The Report of the Independent Commission of Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) asked 145 SENCOs from senior schools and post-16 colleges a similar question and their results suggest that 43% spent up to 1.5 hours collecting the data.

The survey data with regard to the amount of paperwork collected for an application also revealed discrepancies which may affect a SENCO's workload. The majority of respondents, 78%, said they collected between two and four pieces of evidence for an application, whereas, 22% only collected between one and two. Further guidance from the JCQ is needed, as some centres may be spending a disproportionate amount of time on this aspect of AA.

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2.5.2 Annual changes to the JCQ and inspections

Woods (2007), Woods et al. (2018) and Hipkiss (2018) commented on the workload that AA causes for centres, especially when the JCQ make annual changes, as these changes can lead to centres having to make policy changes and changes to documentation needed for inspection.

There are concerns in the literature (Hipkiss, 2018) that JCQ inspections may increase the workload of centres. The data from the survey's respondents revealed that for whole school inspections some centres were inspected annually, and some were inspected every other year, or even every 2-3 years, whilst others had never had an inspection. For specific SEN inspections the data from the respondents revealed that 34% of centres had never experienced this type of inspection. The data also revealed regional differences. This inconsistency may lead to centres not being aware of current practices, or changes in the paperwork needed for a JCQ inspection. (See Tables 7 and 8 on pages 77 and 78 and Figures 6 and 7 on pages 73 and 74.)

2.5.3 The evidence-base behind the extra time awards of 25% and 50%

With regard to the evidence-base behind the extra time awards of 25% and 50% the survey data revealed that 54% of participants considered that it is a system supported by evidence-based research. This is contrary to the research outlined in the literature where Duncan and Purcell (2017), Lovett (2011), McLoughlin (2015) and Woods (2007, 2018) have all commented on the lack of research to support specific AA time limits and how they remove barriers for students with SpLDs. However, 41% of respondents were unsure about this, and 5% believed there was no evidence. With nearly 46% being unsure and saying it is not an evidence-based system, this

may suggest that SEND professionals are not convinced of its efficacy as a system to remove barriers for students with SpLDs in public examinations.

2.5.4 The appropriateness of tests used by AA assessors

The data has revealed possible issues with the testing being used for AA. The respondents were asked to write down the tests they used when assessing for AA. Some centres are using tests that are not accepted for use or are accepted only as qualitative data rather than quantitative, such as SDMT, CATS testing, PHAB, or the Suffolk reading test (see Figure 20). Using out-of-date tests may have a significant impact on a student's scores for AA, either conferring an advantage or disadvantage on them. *The Report of the Independent Commission of Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) also reports on this issue. They say, "some participants stated that they were using tests which are not current and are considered obsolete and some are not on the list of approved JCQ tests. This may suggest that some practitioners are giving Access Arrangements based on results which are no longer considered valid data" (2019, p.174).

Smythe (2014) and Deakin (2015) have both raised issues with the validity and reliability of the tests used for AA. Many of these tests are American normed tests and therefore may have different results when used on a UK population, due to the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the population. *The Report of the Independent Commission of Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) states, "the tests are standardised on an American population, which makes them less reliable assessing a UK population" (2019, p.171). In addition, the quick processing tests, such as the DASH free writing, which is only ten minutes, the CTOPP2, which if you only do the Rapid Automatic Naming tests (RAN), will take less than five minutes and TOMAL2's sub-tests, which include short-term auditory memory and working memory tests only take a few minutes to

administer, are in the top six most used tests. These sub-tests are often used to demonstrate a student has a processing issue as they are tests based on processing tasks, such as retrieval from long term memory when placed under time pressure, short-term auditory memory, working memory and written output. As stated in the literature, Vladescue (2007) explains that using sub-tests from larger tests may not be as reliable.

2.5.5 The training and qualifications of SEND professionals

The data sample suggests that there are more qualified SEND professionals in the independent sector. If this is true of the wider sector then this, in conjunction with the data collected on positions of responsibility, (as seen in Figures 4 and 5), may lead to inequity in delivering SEND between the maintained and independent sectors. The recent *Report of the Independent Commission of Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) seems to reinforce that this is true sector-wide, since they reported that , "10% of secondary SENCOs in maintained schools are qualified to assess for Access Arrangements, as opposed to 34% in the independent sector* (Dunford, 2019, *unpublished data, p.171).

This may be the reason why the media, and as a result, the populace believe that SEND students are more prevalent and have a greater advantage in the independent sector than those in the maintained sector. It is possible to assume that the more expertise a centre has, the greater the provision for its students, therefore conferring a possible advantage.

The survey data has highlighted a concerning issue with regard to those who are eligible to assess in centres, as it would appear that most centres use outside specialists to help them with their AA assessments. 66% of respondents said they used outside assessors in their centre. It is clear that despite the drive by the DfE (2013) and

JCQ to give SENCOs the responsibility for assessment, this is not the norm in most centres that took part in the survey. This may be due to the fact that the SENCO is too busy to assess, so must rely on outside support. Possibly revealing the burdensome workload many SENCOs contend with around the country. The recent Curran et al. (2018) study on SENCO workload revealed that the majority of SENCOs who responded from senior schools felt they could not provide the specialist support for all their SEND students.

In addition to this, the data in Table 14 shows that in the study sample, there is a greater proportion of assessors with JCQ equivalent qualifications in the maintained sector as opposed to the independent sector.

Table 14

Data from the SEND Professionals' Survey According to Qualification

Highest Qualification including APC								
Row Labels	D	M	APC	Lv7	Sp	Lv5	JCQ	None
Independent Senior school	1%	12%	20%	32%	14%	7%	7%	7%
Secondary school	1%	7%	11%	26%	23%	3%	17%	13%

Note: D = Doctorate, M = Masters, APC = Assessment Practising Certificate, LV7 = Level 7 in SpLD, SP= specific SENCO qualification, LV5 = Level 5 in SpLD and JCQ = qualifications approved by the JCQ, such as AAA and CCET

As these Level 7 equivalent qualifications have been questioned in terms of their course content and number of hours dedicated to actual testing practice, it is of concern that this qualification type appears to be popular in this sector (McMurray et al., 2017). The data suggests that the Assessment Practising Certificate is also more prevalent in the independent sector, which may suggest that this sector has a greater skill base than the maintained sector. This may

lead to inequalities when it comes to delivering AA to students with SpLDs.

2.6 Findings

The findings suggest there are problems with many aspects of the AA system which may impact on the implementation and delivery of it for students with SpLDs. The survey has highlighted variable practice amongst centres in terms of evidence collected, hours spent on paperwork, tests used to award AA, the use of centre-based assessors, level of qualifications of SEND professionals in centres and inspections by the JCQ. A more comprehensive investigation is needed to ascertain how centres deal with AA. This information is best gained through interviews with SEND professionals who implement AA in their centres.

2.6.1 The Interviews

The information from the SEND Professionals' Survey suggested that further exploration was needed in terms of understanding how pupils are referred to SENCOs for assessment, what assessments were used and what evidence was then gathered to substantiate a student's need for AA when taking public examinations. A further area to investigate, regarding paperwork, was how Form 8 is processed in centres. Form 8 was not mentioned in the initial SEND Professionals' Survey, but as it is the main document for applying for AA, understanding its usage may clarify the level of paperwork.
It was also considered important to understand how SENCOs deal with students who need AA. Do they consult them and instruct them on how they can use their AA? Do they consult their parents/guardians and their teachers to explain the results of the AA assessment and how AAs may benefit the student? The survey highlighted this area, as it revealed that only a small proportion of SENCOs consulted students and their parents/guardians about their AA. Out of the 408 responses 17 said they gathered evidence by

contacting parents and 18 contacted pupils. Understanding how the student would use their AA or combination of AAs is important as research is lacking in terms of how AAs remove barriers for certain kinds of SpLDs.

The survey highlighted that 66% of centres used outside assessors to help them with their AA assessments. The question of manageability was raised in terms of centre resources and if these limited their ability to assess and provide for AA. Woods (2007) and Woods et al. (2018) have raised this as an important issue in terms of equality of provision. In addition, a further exploration of the JCQ inspection process was also investigated.

In terms of qualifications, the findings from the survey revealed there are many routes to obtain a qualification to become an AA assessor. Gaining further insight into how the interviewees came into the field of SpLD and their subsequent training route/s would shed light on this. An extension of this was to look at whether there are barriers to further training in this field.

Finally, it was thought important to ascertain how the system can be changed to be more effective, if indeed, interviewees believed this was necessary.

The above issues are explored in 23 interviews. This is the next strand of the research, which is outlined in the following chapter, Strand Two – SEND Professional interviews.

3. Strand Two – The SEND Professional Interviews

3.1 Aims

The data gained from the SEND Professionals' Survey was used to inform the SEND professionals' interviews. Twelve questions were derived from issues that arose from the data collected from the SEND survey, and these were employed in semi-structured individually delivered interview sessions. The aim was to provide more detailed information on SEND professionals' views of the effectiveness of the AA system. The issues addressed relate to those in the SEND Survey findings (section 2.6) and cover 1) the workload of SENCOs and the administration of AA, 2) JCQ inspection processes, 3) the training to become an AA assessor and level of qualifications SEND professionals have in centres, 4) the evidence base and tests used for assessing for AA, and 5) the student voice. The information gained was used to answer Research Question 2: How effective do SEND professionals think the current systems and practices are for AA? Effectiveness refers to how successful this system is at delivering AA to students who meet the eligibility criteria. The interviews involved gathering views on whether SEND professionals see the system as fit for purpose in terms of identifying students who need AA and the process of implementation. Issues were examined in detail.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Participants

Following the SEND Professionals' Survey, 191 respondents consented to take part in an interview. Interviews were used to gain in-depth qualitative data of the participants views of AA. The researcher chose interviews over other methods, such as focus groups, to keep confidentiality and maintain personal views without one participant influencing another. People who attend focus groups

may be swayed by other participant's responses or be intimidated, therefore, lessening the likelihood of a true reflection of their personal views on AA. Interviews are more intimate, where rapports can be established in a short space of time between interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, responses tend to reflect the interviewee's situation more accurately.

Initially, the plan was to conduct interviews with two participants from each region in the country (please refer to Table 2 for the regional names). However, participants in Northern Ireland were very difficult to contact, so this region is not represented in this section of the study. Also, some regions were more responsive than others. A total of 23 interviews were conducted, representing 12% of the sample. In order to select the participants a search was conducted via the twelve regions on the main Excel spreadsheet which held all the data from the respondents to the SEND Professionals' survey. The researcher looked at the candidate's position of responsibilities to obtain a spread of participants with different posts. For example, if they worked for the local authority, in a Pupil Referral Unit, or worked both in the maintained and private sectors etc.. This decision was made to make sure that as wide a range of responses was included in the research. Two participants came from the South-East, three from Yorkshire, six from London, two from the North-West, two from the West Midlands, one from the South-West, one from the East of England, three from the East Midlands, one from Wales, one from the North-East and one from Scotland. The interviewees have been renamed to preserve anonymity. Please see Table 15 which gives background details of the participants.

Table 15

Participant Details

Participant	Age	Qualifications	Job Description	Centre Type
Steve	41-50	Level 7, Specific SENCO, Masters	SENCO	Secondary mainstream
Sophie	61+	Level 7, Masters, Doctorate	Educational Psychologist	All schools
Shelly	21-30	Specific SENCO Qualification, Masters	SENCO and SpLD teacher	Secondary mainstream
Scott	41-50	Level 7	SpLD teacher	FE college
Sheila	61+	Level 7, Masters, Doctorate	Independent AA assessor	All schools
Sebastian	31-40	JCQ Qualification, Specific SENCO Qualification	SENCO & SpLD teacher	Secondary special school
Samuel	41-50	Level 7, Masters, Doctorate	SENCO & SpLD teacher	Independent senior school & inner city-maintained school
Shirley	41-50	Level 7	SENCO & SpLD teacher	Independent secondary school
Skye	61+	JCQ Qualification, Level 7	Independent AA assessor	All schools

Name	Age	Qualification	Role	Setting
Sharon	51-60	Level 7, Specific SENCO Qualification	SENCO & Class teacher	Secondary school
Scarlett	41-50	Level 7, APC	SpLD teacher & assessor	Special secondary school
Saffron	61+	Level 7, Masters, APC	SpLD teacher	FE college
Sienna	61+	Level 7, APC	SpLD teacher	Secondary school
Sandra	31-40	Level 7, Specific SENCO Qualification	SENCO	Independent secondary school
Sylvie	31-40	Level 5	Local Authority SEN Manager of SpLD teachers	All schools
Sabine	41-50	JCQ Qualification	SENCO	Secondary school
Savannah	31-40	JCQ Qualification	Assistant SENCO & class teacher	Secondary school
Samantha	41-50	Level 7, Specific SENCO Qualification, Masters, APC	Independent assessor	All schools
Stanley	51-60	JCQ Qualification, Specific SENCO Qualification	SENCO & SpLD teacher	Secondary school

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Shannon	41-50	JCQ Qualification, Level 5	SpLD teacher	Secondary school
Stella	31-40	Level 7, Masters, Doctorate, APC	SENCO & SpLD teacher	Secondary school
Suki	41-50	Level 7	SpLD teacher	FE college
Sadie	41-50	Level 7	SENCO	Secondary school

Note: Level 5 and Level 7 are qualifications in teaching and assessing learners with Specific Learning Difficulties.

3.2.2 Materials

The answers received from the SEND Professional survey informed a set of questions for interviewing SEND professionals about AA. Twelve questions (Appendix 2 - SEND Professional interview questions) were designed for the interview. Questions 1 and 2 investigated the paperwork needed for AA and department protocols, as the SEND professional survey highlighted varied practice in this area. Question 3 asked if SEND professionals consulted students and parents/guardians about AAs. Questions 4 to 6 covered training and qualifications for AA assessors. There are now many different training routes available to become an AA assessor, as revealed in the literature (Chapter 1, section 5.3). Question 7 asked if resources limited the interviewees' ability to assess and provide for AA, as the literature suggests that AA is resource-led rather than needs-led (Woods et al. 2018). Question 8 asked about the interviewees' experience of JCQ inspections and how often they occurred, as the SEND Professionals' Survey indicated variability in this area (Chapter 2, section 4.2) Question 9 asked if evidence from class

teachers, as opposed to specialist teacher reports or educational psychologist reports was best to support an AA application, as responses from the SEND Professionals' Survey suggested there were differences in practice with this aspect of the process. Question 10 asked if the interviewees found the system manageable. This was a question that had been asked in the surveys of Woods (2007) and Woods et al. (2018) and was included here to see if there had been any change in experience Question 11 asked if respondents felt that the system could be changed to be more effective. Finally, question 12 asked the interviewees if they had any further comments to make on the AA system, enabling them to express views which may have not been covered in the interview.

The twelve questions were piloted within the Special Needs department at the researcher's school. The department comprised of two experts in the field who are both AA assessors and special needs teachers. Feedback from them suggested there was some repetition in the questions asked with respect to those in the SEND Professionals' Survey. Discussions took place about other questions to be included in the interview. Initially, the interview questions asked what tests assessors used, and how familiar they were with validity and reliability of the tests. These two questions were in the Survey so were taken out of the final set of interview questions. The department suggested two other questions which they believed should be included: whether the professionals consult students and parents about AA, and a question about resources to provide for AA.

3.2.3 Analysis of the data

Content analysis was used to analyse the interviews, as it allows for the reporting of common issues arising from large amounts of textual information (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). It is considered quite a flexible tool for analysis as it encompasses a variety of

approaches, such as selecting words, themes, concepts or categories and then looking for patterns; however, it is the variety of approaches that has led some to criticise the use of content analysis, as there appears to be no firm definition as to its processes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Content analysis was used in this research due to the volume of text data that needed to be analysed. When examining the data, responses were analysed in terms of their prevalence. The analysis was conducted in two stages. Initially, an inductive approach was taken when examining the interview data as this allowed for similarities and differences to be revealed in the data and also to search for patterns which were sorted into themes and sub-themes. Three distinct themes emerged from this section of the analysis; these were *Time*, *Experience* and *Inconsistencies* (see Appendix 3 - samples of the coding process, stage 1 and mapping to stage 2*).* However, it is worth noting that when analysing the data, the researcher may have been searching for patterns that unconsciously she had already believed existed as a result of being a SENCO and studying the literature. Stage two saw the mapping of these themes to existing issues found in the literature, a deductive approach. For example, the theme of *Time* could be mapped to the themes found in the literature to do with workload, qualifications and assessment. This enabled the researcher to link information to the findings of previous knowledge (Crowe, Inder, & Porter, 2015) and provided both quantitative and qualitative data. This approach gives greater structure and clarity to the way the data is presented in this study. The data provides first-hand accounts of the experiences SpLD professionals have dealing with the AA system.

Researchers who use this approach suggest that problems or challenges may occur with data that does not necessarily fit the existing theories or models, or that they are driven only to formulate themes based on existing or established theories or models

(Graneheim, Lindgre, & Lundman, 2017). In the case of this research there were some sub-themes that did not fit under the described categories that emerged, or the existing issues found in the literature; these were to do with the moral and ethical stances of the SpLD professionals, and being valued as a practitioner. However, these two issues were not relevant when answering RQ2.

When examining the data, participants' responses were analysed in terms of their prevalence. This provided quantitative data, as outlined in the *Results*, which in some instances corroborated the data from the SEND Professionals' Survey, in addition to providing qualitative data that illustrated the issues by means of participants' personal experiences, views and perspectives. This data was then analysed using the guiding framework of the five issues which were found in the survey data: 1) the workload of SENCOs and the administration of AA, 2) JCQ inspection processes, 3) the training to become an AA assessor and level of qualifications SEND professionals have in centres, 4) the evidence base and tests used for assessing for AA and 5) the student voice.

Content analysis provides "a direct representation of what was said to provide answers to the research question" (Crowe et al., 2015, p.619). The interview data was used to examine the issues raised in the Survey regarding AA and SEND professionals' views of the effectiveness of AA.

3.2.4 Interview Transcription

After the interviews took place the recordings were listened to and responses were typed into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. A full transcription of the responses was not conducted. Instead the interviews were listened to four times and substantive statements were transcribed. Woods (1986, cited in Wellington, 2000, p.84)

suggests this is a recognised method of transcription, as when notes are being made the researcher can create an index of contents. After this initial transcription, the researcher can then listen again, and relevant parts of the interview can be transcribed. McLellan et al. (2003) also report that partial or summary transcribed interviews is a recognised method of transcription. They believe it is important to pay attention to text relevance, as what to include from your transcripts should be guided by your research question (McLellan et al., 2003). Immersion in the data responses began to reveal patterns of similarities and differences. These were then recorded and grouped together. For example, issues with excessive paperwork, inspections and meetings etc were found to have a similar thread going through them, which was *time*. However, the experiences of the participants revealed differences in how they dealt with these issues, therefore, to encompass this, the theme of *inconsistency* was derived. There is inconsistency in the way SEND professionals deal with the system of AA despite the fact that they all must adhere to the JCQ manual on *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.*

What is missing when transcribing in this way are the pauses and fillers in responses. These aspects may provide the researcher with greater understanding of how the interviewee really felt when answering the questions. For example, a long pause may suggest the interviewee had to consider a situation that they may not have contemplated previously, or hurried speech may have suggested the interviewee felt passionately about an issue. Below is an example of the type of transcribing that occurred, when one interviewee was asked Q10 'Do you consider the present system of AA manageable?' she said,

> "No underlined 5 times. In terms of the way in which you have to fill in the
> form you know at the top right hand corner where it's got the text box for
> the name and you have to keep putting the name in on every page it's like
> someone wrote that form in 1983 and technologically it hasn't been

updated. [….][6] The form itself needs a complete update and in many ways, I actually think, perhaps controversially, we should get rid of it. We've got AAO now, we've got the report and we've got your evidence, job done […] Yeah because let's face it it's a huge workload. I wouldn't mind if someone who knew what they were doing came and checked every single piece of paper scrupulously, but they don't. So basically, the way I do it is as long as I feel confident that I have done appropriate testing and I genuinely believe the scores and you know the decision I've made then I feel I've done my bit making sure the process is just and fair and levelling the playing field." (Sandra)

Here the interviewee has answered the question and has provided views and experiences relative to the response, providing qualitative detail. She brought up issues of outdated technology, excessive paperwork and the fact that inspections appear to be irregular in the way some centres experience them. This data was then categorised under the sub-themes of workload and inspections. Where relevant remarks were made by the interviewees, time marks were added to the Excel spreadsheet to enable the researcher to find these quotations quickly and report them accurately.

Once this first stage of analysis took place the themes were then mapped to the five themes derived from the literature. This was to provide greater clarity and structure to the reader to enable them to understand the threads permeating through this section of the research. This method of transcription provided rich data to answer Research Question 2.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

The most important ethical issue to consider during this phase of the research was participant anonymity to ensure participants felt secure when speaking honestly about their views in relation to AA. The

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[6] Square brackets [ ] are used to denote missing words, sentences or phrases

SEND professionals interviewed came from a variety of backgrounds and centre types. Participant anonymity had to be guaranteed as one potential issue of concern was whether they might be worried that their responses could be seen as critical of employers and/or may jeopardise their future career prospects. However, they were assured that the responses would be entirely anonymous, and that no respondent would be identified in any write-up of the research. In order to anonymise the data, each transcript was given a fabricated first name as an identifier that could be used in collating numerical information about the responses and in reporting comments as quotations in the Results.

The researcher also had to consider the potential issue of the research being affected by her own experiences as a SENCO. It is clear that researcher bias was a factor to consider in this study, from the initial creation of this research project, to formulating the RQs, to devising the interview questions, to selectively transcribing the interview data. All of these stages, despite trying to be impartial would be affected by unconscious bias. However, maintaining impartiality when conducting the interviews was important in order not to influence a participant's views of an issue, especially as the interviews were semi-structured, which allowed the participants freedom to explore and elaborate on issues.

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 Data Collection

The researcher sent emails from her UCL email account to participants who had left their contact details, inviting them to participate in an interview. The contact email explained that all the data from the SEND Professionals' Survey had been analysed and that the interview phase of the research was now ready to be conducted. The email stated that these would be conducted by telephone and it suggested possible days and times. Once there was

a positive response, a reply email confirmed timings. It also asked them if they would be happy for the interviews to be recorded and confirmed that all data for the final study would be anonymous.

When the interviews commenced, the researcher asked whether the participant was happy for responses to be recorded and stated that anonymity would be maintained. All the participants agreed to audio recording of the interview. The researcher used a recording application from the App Store, *VoiceRecorder,* and used a phone which had a microphone. During the interviews, notes were made as a backup, in case the recording device failed. The length of the interviews varied between sixteen minutes to an hour and sixteen minutes, with the average interview lasting around thirty-seven minutes.

3.5 Results

The results will be presented according to the issues that were identified from the SEND Professionals Survey. These were: 1) the workload of SENCOs and the administration of AA, 2) JCQ inspection processes, 3) the evidence base and tests used for assessing for AA, 4) the training to become an AA assessor and level of qualifications SEND professionals have in centres, and 5) the student voice.[7] In covering each of these issues I present first a summary of the data from the SEND Professionals' Survey and then the results from the interviews. The data is presented by providing direct quotations from the interviewees and the number of responses to each question.

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[7] The questions in the semi-structured interviews relate to the above categories as follows:
1) Workload Q2,7 and 10; 2) JCQ inspections Q8; 3) Evidence base & Tests Q1 and 9; 4) Training and qualifications Q4, 5, and 6; Q5 Student voice Q3. Q11 and 12 asked respondents further questions concerning their views on possible changes and other concerns not mentioned in the interview schedule.

3.5.1 The Workload of SENCOs

JCQ annual changes to AA criteria have increased the workload of
SENCOs as revealed in the literature and the SEND Professionals'
Survey. Woods (2007) and Woods et. al. (2018) reported that the AA
paperwork is excessive. Hipkiss (2018) recommended that centres
employ an AA administrator to assist with the paperwork. In addition,
the Bath Spa Survey (Curran et al., 2018) stated that 74% of their
1900 respondents do not have enough time to do their jobs (2018,
p.6); increasing AA administrative paperwork compounds this issue.
This section will discuss the SENCO workload in terms of the
positions of responsibility that many SENCOs hold in centres. The
greater their positions of responsibility the less time SENCOs have to
dedicate to the job of administering AA; this is indicated by the data
collected in both the SEND Professionals' Survey and from the
interviews.

3.5.2 SENCO Positions of Responsibility

Survey data – positions of responsibility
In response to the question about positions of responsibility, 8 of the
87 respondents from the independent sector (9%) who responded to
the question reported having one other position of responsibility and
also teaching in the classroom. In contrast, 33 of the 133
respondents from the maintained sector (25%) who responded to the
question reported having one other position of responsibility and
teaching. The data reveal that the maintained sector SENCOs have
more positions of responsibility, which suggests that they have less
time to dedicate to their role of SENCO. In addition, most class sizes
in the maintained sector are larger than in the independent sector,
which contributes to the workload.

Interview data - positions of responsibility
Sabine, a SENCO from the maintained sector, explained that her role
as SENCO included AA assessing, safeguarding, school counsellor,

and mental health lead for the school. She was at work by 6:30 every morning to deal with her responsibilities. She said, "The demands were untenable." Scarlett is an assessor involved in intervention and group teaching, and responsible for completing all the administration for AA and support in examinations. Shannon reported being the only assessor in her school trust of five senior schools who is qualified to assess for AA. She is in charge of assessments for all these schools. Sarah reported being in charge of assessments and out-of-class support, arrangements for AA examinations and organising DSA support in her FE college. Although ascertaining the positions of responsibility from the participants was not a direct question in the interview schedule, many of the participants revealed the pressures they were under. This was especially so for the three SENCOs working in the FE sector and the ten working in the maintained sector. They commented:

> "It is not well appreciated that this is a job in its own right. It is a patch on part of a job." (Savannah)

> "It's another layer of extra work that isn't resourced properly and people don't understand it. A little bit of magic that someone waves a wand, and someone gets extra time." (Samuel)

> "...the workload is huge." (Sophie)

> "If you are not experienced the admin can be overwhelming." (Sylvie)

> "For the SENCO to be responsible for this area is too much because of the other roles that they have to carry out. Most schools need a team to do this." (Skye)

3.5.3 AA paperwork – Evidence for Normal Way of Working

Survey data – amount of evidence collected for AA

One major contribution to the workload of SENCOs is the time spent completing the JCQ paperwork for a student's AA application. This includes providing centre-based evidence of the student's normal way of working and a document called Form 8. The data from the survey suggests that the majority, 78%, of the 365 respondents who replied to the question, collected two to four pieces of paperwork whilst 22% collected one to two pieces. One hundred and twenty five out of four hundred and forty one (28%) respondents said they spent between three to five hours collating their documentation for AA and 127/441 (29%) spent one to three hours.

Interview data – amount of evidence collected for AA

Sixteen of the 23 interviewees regarding the administration of the paperwork for AA confirmed that it adds significantly to the workload of SENCOs. In particular, when there is no firm guidance on how much evidence is needed to support an AA application from the JCQ. Comments on the types of paperwork devised and collected by the interviewees as evidence were

> "evidence from the staff to get an idea of what is going on in the classroom, do they need a reader or extra time during class to demonstrate normal way of working. Also have the tests as a back up to support." (Sebastian)

> "I have a report on ISAMS to answer the key questions five conditions, and the teachers have to look at the arrangements and then respond to the questions and write a small comment. In the summer exams the boys are in a separate room and there is an Excel spreadsheet which outlines arrangements and the invigilator will tick if they have used their arrangements. I used to take pictures of the green pen work but have stopped doing this …as it is such a waste of time." (Shirley)

"They get pupils to sign a feedback form that they go through the AA that would be useful to them. They created the form as sometimes pupils don't know how to use extra time, so they discuss the arrangements with them." (Sadie)

The SENCO has "devised a very good pupil profile that the staff are supposed to read and the ladies that support the students get the opinions of the pupils as to what works best for them". (Sienna)

Survey data – types of evidence collected

Table 6 in the survey provides a list of the types of evidence that respondents collected to support an AA application. Three hundred and thirteen out of four hundred and eight respondents to this question (77%) collected teacher feedback and 218/408 (53%) collected results of mock and other examinations to support an application, 166/408 (40%) used the standardised testing recorded in Form 8 and 134/408 (33%) used specialist medical reports. As this question enabled participants to write a list of evidence used, it suggests centres use a combination of different types of evidence.

Interview data – types of evidence collected

Q9 in the interview explored this further, asking if respondents thought that evidence from class teachers was the best way to support AA rather than a report from specialist teachers and educational psychologists. Four SENCOs reported in their interviews that teachers were too busy to respond to these requests.

"It is always really hard to get evidence from teachers. You send out requests and only get a handful back." (Savannah)

"Teachers don't reply to your emails." (Samuel)

Six respondents made the point that class teachers do not always recognise or understand a student's SpLD.

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"The teacher may not notice a pupil's need." (Sienna)

"They may not necessarily understand how hard that child is working to get what he is doing in class." (Stella)

An assessor in FE commented that many of the students only have one tutor teaching their subject, for example plumbing. This can cause issues if that tutor does not recognise the student's needs and therefore will not supply supporting evidence for AA. One SENCO gave an example of a student who had been recently tested and found to qualify for a reader, scribe and 50% extra time because their scores were below average. When teachers were contacted none of them recognised the student's need. This student clearly developed compensatory strategies for their issues and was able to mask their severity from their teachers. However, 17 participants made the point that having both teacher evidence and a specialist report was important.

"I think they are both valid, you cannot have one without another as one is qualitative." (Sylvie)

"It isn't black and white. I think a combination is always best you need to substantiate scores with teacher feedback." (Shirley)

3.5.4 Form 8

In addition to the concerns regarding the amount of evidence needed for an AA application there are the issues with Form 8. This is the main document that acts as the student's passport for AA, providing a 'pen portrait of the candidate's needs' (JCQ, 2019). Form 8 is comprised of three sections which outline the student's history of need, assessment scores and the AA

awarded. Changes to this document have been made annually for the last four years by the JCQ. One of the most significant changes has been to record below-average scores in processing, rather than to report all assessment scores. The usefulness of this document has changed as it is no longer a 'pen portrait' providing all the scores from an assessment. This is particularly important, as Form 8 is transferable to other centres if a student moves. Outlining only what a student cannot do does not provide a full and rounded representation of that student.

Interview data - Form 8

Twelve respondents said they provide a complete record of testing and the remainder commented that they only included below-average scores on the form, as this is current JCQ guidance. Newer SENCOs have only ever been taught to put below-average scores on the form. Some commented that the form is never checked, so now they only record the below average scores down and some said it saved time just to adhere to the guidance. Interviewee comments suggest there is inconsistency when completing the document. This can impact on how time is managed in centres, which affects the workload of SENCOs.

> "I put all the scores on because that Form 8 can be accessed by tutors, as well and sometimes it can show their strengths." (Suki)

> "You need that complete passport and record that goes with the pupil… it presents a more complete picture for the school and other centres" if the entire form is completed." (Skye)

Many do not complete the form with all tests, this may be in part due to time constraints, or they are adhering rigidly to the current guidelines.

> "I don't unless I need to… pressures of time." (Sienna)

Others commented that they have changed their practice due to recent updated JCQ training.

> "I only use the low tests on the form." (Shannon)

> "We were told just to put the scores necessary". (Sadie)

> "I used to do the whole thing and have stopped doing it because no one was checking the form". (Sandra)

As Form 8 is the student's passport to AA it is transferrable between centres that have a working relationship with each other. If all the testing that has been carried out on a student is not recorded on this document, then the new centre may not know what tests have been previously conducted. Completing Form 8 with all the testing carried out on a student would benefit the next centre. One assessor from an FE college commented,

> "We can't accept Form 8s from schools because we don't have the qualifications of the tutors, or specialist teachers that did the initial assessments and Form 8s…, but usually they are so badly written and they are not done well. We often find that schools are giving them arrangements that they are not allowed to have, so like a reader in a reading test in an English exam. Every year there are quite a few arrangements we have to actually take them away or tidy them up significantly. I don't know how they get away with it to be fair." (Scott)

This assessor works in an FE college that has a split campus over three different sites with 12,000 students. The team at this college processes thousands of AA applications for students who arrive

either with existing AA from GCSE or who must be assessed. This suggests that a full record, of a complete range of tests undertaken, would benefit FE colleges and help them manage their workload. Another assessor from an FE college stated

> "Getting the Form 8 and qualification from the person who did it from the broad range of schools we deal with it is actually quicker to retest by the time you have to go to the school, find the assessor, lots of rural schools that don't have an inhouse assessor." (Suki)

This assessor works part-time in a college with over 10,000 students. Evidence from the interviews suggests that FE colleges have significant issues when it comes to accessing Form 8 from other centres. This creates further work for them in terms of contacting previous schools and reassessment of their candidates.

3.5.5 Manageability of the AA process

Recognising the issues with the administrative process of AA, Woods (2007) and Woods et al. (2018) asked participants about the manageability of the existing AA system and Q10 in the interview also dealt with this.

Woods' (2007) participants were asked "Do you consider the present system of allocating AA to be manageable?" 80% responded "No" and 20% responded "Yes". They had an 87% response rate to this question (2007, p.90). In Woods et al. (2018) the same question was asked. 43% of respondents agreed that the system was unmanageable. However, 24% were ambivalent and 25% considered it manageable.

Interview data – manageability of AA
The data from the interviews revealed that 12 said "No it was not manageable" whilst 11 said "Yes it was", but there were many

qualifications concerning time, the complexity of the system and having enough qualified teachers. Interviewees stated

> *"Yes, if we are given more time." (Savannah)*

> "Yes, if you don't have four different exam boards." (Shirley)

> "Yes, providing you had sufficient staff." (Shelly)

Three interviewees commented that over time the system has been reformed and is now easier to use, in particular the three interviewees liked AA-online, which is the online portal for applications, introduced in 2008. One commented that there is less ambiguity in the JCQ regulations since very clear cut-off points for receiving AA are now in place.

Those who answered "No" tended to focus on the issues with the paperwork required by the JCQ for AA. They said there is too much repetition. The JCQ continue to use old technology in their main form, Form 8, making the document difficult to use. AA is not resourced adequately, in terms of time and funding in some centres, making it hard for SENCOs to deal with the paperwork. Participants said

> "There is so much repetition and cutting and pasting. It's a painful and time-consuming process." (Scarlet)

> "It's getting a little bit unworkable in that they (JCQ) keep changing it every year." (Sienna)

3.6 The JCQ Inspections

Another area that was covered in the survey was the JCQ inspection process. Currently there are two types of inspection, whole school

inspections, which look at how the examinations are conducted, and specific SEND inspections, which inspect the AA paperwork kept on file for each individual student application.

Survey data - inspections

Table 7 and 8 from the survey reveal the different inspection regimes. The data revealed that 269/347 (78%) of schools receive an annual whole school inspection where the JCQ inspector comes to inspect the school's examination routine and documentation. Only 5/63 (7%) of schools in the South East, 4/62 (6%) in London, 5/50 (10%) in the North West and 4/30 (13%) in the South West have never been inspected. The data shows that 30/338 (9%) of centres are inspected every other year and 18/338 (5%) every two to three years. In addition, the specific SEND inspection is more sporadic, where only 136/291 (47%) of schools surveyed have an annual inspection. 24/67 (36%) schools in the South East have never had a specific SEN inspection, 15/46 (33%) in London, 24/63 (37%) in the North west and 11/32 (35%) in the West Midlands have never been subjected to this inspection.

Interview data - inspections

Data from the interviews reveal that 13 respondents have a yearly whole school inspection that is generally dealt with by an examinations officer and not the SENCO. One centre has never been inspected and five are not inspected on a yearly basis.

> "We haven't had one in a long time. Last one the JCQ came and didn't even look at the AA side. North of Leeds the JCQ doesn't know we exist." (Suki)

One commented that their centre had been through three exams officers in the last two years.

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> "A very difficult job and workload is underestimated. These exam officers have all resigned due to pressure when organising AA. They have had an inspection every year from the JCQ." (Stella)

Another interviewee commented on a similar experience regarding the exams officer in a large inner-city comprehensive school where the exams officer resigned, and the school replaced her with what the interviewee called

> "almost a gap student… she was a secretary that filed things wrong." (Samuel)

As a result, during the JCQ inspection, the assessor was contacted at 7am to ask where the supporting documentation was for the AAs that had been applied for. This was a hugely stressful experience for him. Another interviewee commented on a traumatic experience involving the CIE board of inspectors. The inspector, on this occasion, inadvertently ticked the wrong box on a form which resulted in this SENCO being given a malpractice warning. The experience was so traumatic that the SENCO's expectations relating to a JCQ inspection are permanently altered.

> "I used to worry about it and I don't anymore, because we're human. I don't think they are going to take away our right to be an exam centre because of a loss of a signature or something. In a way everything is arguable." (Shirley)

One SENCO who was new to position explained that the former SENCO did not do the job correctly. This resulted in

> "having two inspections a year, one SEN and one whole school." (Sharon)

Other comments concern the inconsistencies in the level of scrutiny shown by inspectors.

"Sometimes we wish that given the amount of effort that we put into our files someone would look at them." (Sadie)

"There is quite a disparity in what they are doing." (Scarlet)

"The inspector last year just picked out a report and was with the exams. One year he came up and had a list of people he wanted to see the paperwork on." (Saffron)

"The inspector chooses one or two at random, so it can be quite frustrating when you spend all this time compiling documentation." (Steve)

Another major issue about inspections is that not all the awarding bodies are supported by the JCQ. Inspectors from the CIE board also visit centres, as do other inspectors from smaller awarding bodies. Centres can have several different inspections each year. There do not appear to be many differences between the different exam boards' criteria in terms of awarding AA. This all adds to the workload for AA.

3.7 The evidence base for additional time awards

The literature review revealed issues in the evidence base that supports the extra time awards. Mcloughlin (2015) and Duncan and Purcell (2017) argued there is no empirical justification for these awards, and not enough studies have been conducted on how extra time benefits students with varying SpLDs. Twenty five percent extra time is the most commonly applied for AA (Ofqual, 2019). In the SEND Professionals' Survey 86% of respondents said that 25% extra time was the most common AA they applied for in their centre.

3.8 The Tests used by AA assessors

The literature review highlighted issues with tests used to assess for AA. In the SEND Professionals' Survey, respondents were asked to list the tests that they used for AA. In the interviews Q1 asked how students were referred and how referrals were dealt with in terms of screening.

Survey data – assessment tests

Responses in the survey (summarised in Table 10) indicated that the tests most used were the DASH, CTOPP2, WRAT4/5, TOMAL2, Lucid Exact and the SDMT tests. Data from the *Report of the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019, p.174) also highlights that these tests are the most commonly used. These tests are quick and easy to administer and also have sub-tests within them, so you do not necessarily have to complete the entire battery. The table also reveals other tests that need longer to administer, such as the YARC, WIAT2/3 and ART and it may be that assessors are using these in combination with the quicker processing tests. The following three tests from those rated as most widely used are problematic. The computerised screener Lucid Exact (GL Assessment) seems to be a popular test as 131/421 (31%) respondents said they used this. However, current guidance states that results from this test can only be used if the assessor is present when the student is sitting the test. It can take up to 45 minutes to complete so it is difficult to imagine an assessor would have the time to watch someone complete this. The SDMT is also controversial, as it was standardised in the 1960s and SASC currently have a proviso on their website saying that it should not be used for AA. In addition, the DASH test is problematic as the standardisation sample is small and a 10-minute freewriting test may not necessarily reflect a student's ability when writing for extended periods of time, as in an examination.

Table 10 also revealed tests that should no longer be used for AA but were listed by assessors for this purpose; tests such as the BPVS, Phab and the Suffolk reading test. Despite yearly updates, centres are still not using recommended tests for assessment.

Interview data – assessment tests

When discussing the tests available to assessors two interviewees' comments reveal that it is the short processing tests that appear to be relied on for an AA application.

> "SENCOs will take CTOPP2 and TOWRE2 and that's all they do; they take the easy options and are not interested as to whether pupils are fantastic readers or spellers. That is a travesty. This shouldn't be stand-alone evidence." (Sophie)

> "I always do the TOMAL2 first, as that is much quicker than the CTOPP2. If knowing the child and you just miss a score slightly then I will then go on to do the CTOPP… then you will get the result you hoped for." (Shannon)

Thirty nine percent of the interviewees conducted baseline assessments to determine if further assessing was needed for AA. The further assessments included many of the quick processing and group tests, such as the SDMT, the DASH free writing, the WRAT spelling tests, CTOPP2 and TOMAL2. Only six of the interviewees mentioned the use of reading tests which included the DRA, YARC, WIATII, WRAT5, GORT4 and the ART.

3.9 Qualifications and Training of SEND professionals

The literature review revealed there may be a discrepancy in the number of trained SEND professionals between the maintained and independent sectors which may affect delivery of this system. It also highlighted issues with differences across the training courses on

offer to become an AA assessor. The SEND Professionals' Survey and interview questions 5 and 6 explored this.

3.9.1 Qualifications

Survey Data – amount of qualified SEND professionals
The SEND Professionals' Survey data represents respondents who hold a variety of qualifications, from Doctorate level, to Level 7, to holding no qualifications. The data indicate that the independent sector employs more highly qualified SEND professionals than the maintained sector. Figure 18 indicates that 32% of those working in the independent sector hold a Level 7 qualification as opposed to 26% in the maintained sector. These figures need to be viewed in light of the fact that the majority of respondents to this survey came from the maintained sector, 232 respondents (46%), as opposed to 133 respondents (26%) from the independent sector. The maintained sector also has more SEND professionals that hold the new JCQ and SENCO qualifications, 17% and 23% respectively, as opposed to the independent sector which has 7% and 14%. This may be because all maintained school SENCOs must hold the National SENCO award which came into being in 2009, so newcomers to the role have to have this postgraduate qualification by law. Since 2013 the DfE has required that SENCOs manage AA applications in schools. In addition, the JCQ qualifications are not as expensive to complete as a Level 7 course, so may be a preferable option if centres have budgetary constraints.

Another issue that was revealed by the SEND Professionals' Survey was the use of outside assessors. The data revealed that 66% of centres use outside assessors, suggesting again that there is variance in terms of the qualifications across centres as many centres may not have qualified staff to assess for AA. This may also suggest that SENCOs do not have the time to assess and therefore

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outsource this aspect of their job. Current guidance by the JCQ recommends that all assessment be carried out by an internal assessor within the centre. Outside assessors must have a working relationship with the centre (JCQ, 2019).

Interview Data – number of qualified SEND professionals

One interviewee from the FE sector said they had 12,000 students over three campuses and only four members in their SEND department who were all on part-time contracts. He states

> "our team has shrunk despite the number of pupils needing support has grown." (Scott)

Another interviewee who works in an FE college with 10,000 students stated that she is on a

> "zero hours contract, two people are doing the assessments and once her colleague leaves she will not have a permanent contract." (Suki)

Sebastian who works in a special school commented that the biggest issue is money in the teaching profession. He said

> "Everyone's workload has doubled; people are leaving and others are picking up the slack and doing two jobs. When speaking to other colleagues, whatever school they are in, they are all stretched with budget cuts and this is effecting people's mental health."

Sylvie said

> "Secondary SENCOS are mostly older or have left due to workload."

One assessor said that there are a lack of assessors and this "needs tackling."

> "Schools these days are now asking outside assessors to come and assess, which is against the JCQ." (Scott)

3.9.2 Training

The literature review and SEND Professional survey data (section 3.5) revealed issues with the variety of routes on offer to train as an AA assessor, as there is variance in terms of the requirements needed to attend these courses and the qualifications awarded (Bell, 2013; McMurray et al., 2017).

Interview data – training on offer to assess for AA
Questions 5 and 6 in the interview asked about participants' qualifications and if they felt the JCQ qualification to assess, namely qualifying with 100 hours' tuition, was enough to become an AA assessor. Ten interviewees said it was not. Interviewees commented below.

> "CCET with Organisation 1Training, the biggest joke of a course I have ever done in my life. I wouldn't call it Organisation 1 Training, I call it money in the bank. Give us some paper training. It was a joke compared to my Level 5 and 7 training." (Shirley)

> "The more experience you have got the better. No 100 hours is not enough to do the job. It took me a year to get mine" (when referring to her Level 7 qualification). (Sharon)

> "I think you are quite limited with these qualifications. You are limited with the amount of time and what you can do with a child." (Samantha)

> One hundred hours is "a figure plucked out of the air." (Sabine)

However, seven participants believed it was enough time if you had continuous CPD and were able to practise the skill.

> "It is sufficient to do a solid competent job." (Skye)

> "Yes, because I always do the yearly update to refresh things." (Shannon)

> "It is just doing the tests so would have thought that is sufficient. In the sense you are not a full professional." (Saffron)

This respondent then went on to clarify, that it is like a lot of other jobs where you only do one thing, such as nurses and pharmacists who have taken some of the GP jobs in hand due to specialisation in a field.

With regard to training nine interviewees commented on the need for experience to do the job properly.

> "You need experience" (Sabine)

> "Some of the youngsters going into the profession are not particularly well skilled… there is a paucity of skilled people available to take up the posts." (Sophie)

> "Experience is massive. I can draw pretty quick conclusions from working with a child or adult because I have so many years of experience." (Sheila)

> "On balance class teachers really don't have any awareness of what special needs are." (Sandra)

3.9.3 Continuing professional development (CPD)

Interview data - CPD

The interviewees suggested that CPD was the way forward to make sure assessors were kept up to date with issues in the field. However, the data revealed that there is inconsistency when it comes to accessing CPD and further training, such as the JCQ qualification to assess, Level 7, APC, Masters and Doctorate level training. Thirteen people said time and money were the major barriers when it came to CPD and upskilling themselves. Five participants said funding was the issue and four said it was a time issue. Interviewee responses are below.

> "I would be interested in doing a PhD but funding was the main obstacle and also time." (Steve)

> "Money talks, it's expensive to do these courses." This SENCO would like to do additional counselling courses, but the cost would be significant and prohibitive." (Shirley)

> "Money was a barrier and time was an issue and juggling with a young family. Juggling all the time and feeling guilty you are spending time skilling yourself and getting qualifications." (Sophie)

> "If you are a tiny school with no funding and no money how are you going to get all the updates." (Suki)

> It is difficult "to find a course that would be worth leaving school" for. (Sadie)

The latter respondent lives in a remote region, so travel is an issue when attending courses. Another explained that doing additional courses, such as a Masters or Doctorate degree is

"Time consuming, expensive, probably lots of people would like to do it, but they have to self-fund." (Sheila)

Seven participants were lucky enough to have supportive schools that pay for them to attend courses or take further qualifications. One interviewee works for an Academy Trust and they said that if the Trust can see the benefit for the group, as a whole, they will pay for courses. However, this participant is the only assessor in this Trust of five senior schools. Another assessor has said that they had to sign an agreement with their Local Authority which states they will not leave the role for a period of time, as they are paying for the training. It depends where you work, as to what is on offer, in terms of financial support and time off work to complete additional qualifications and CPD.

In addition to training, a further question arose from this issue and that was to do with basic training at PGCE level when completing initial teacher training. One interviewee said that when they trained to be classroom practitioners the SEND training was insufficient, ranging from half a day to three days on a year-long course. One respondent believed that more SpLD training was needed in terms of assessment on the PGCE course and went on to say that the SENCO qualification could be incorporated into the PGCE. Another said that on their PGCE course they had less than a day's training for SEND. It lasted from 10-3pm and included a lunch hour.

Many SEND professionals now have access to CPD via the internet. Professional organisations, such as Real Training, Communicate-Ed, BDA and PATOSS all have web-based learning facilities. However, one respondent reported that this type of training does not suit her needs, as they prefer face to face interaction over distance learning. They stated

Organisation 1 Training distance learning "is good, but I prefer face to face over distance learning. I never really feel that I get as much out of it as I could. I have to be there, I don't like online training. I just think when you are in the room you gather so much more information"… "so you can bounce off people, it's better than sitting there looking at a screen." (Sadie)

3.10 Student involvement or student voice

Another issue that has come to light is student involvement in deciding what is best in terms of AA for them.

Survey data – student voice

Gathering students' views about their priorities for AA is an important process. However, many who completed the SEND Professionals' Survey reported that this is not a universal practice. In Table 6 of the survey only 18 (4%) respondents said they collected students' views and 17 (4%) collected parent/guardian views as a type of evidence to support an AA application.

Interview data – student voice

Responses to Q3 in the interview, suggested that all participants asked their students about their views on their AA. Comments included

"Always, it's crucial that parents and pupils fully understand the arrangements." (Shelly)

"Always speak to students to see if they are happy." (Steve)

"Yes, I often get TAs to help me." (Savannah)

3.11 Additional issues revealed by the interviews

The interviews highlighted other issues during the process. These included funding to implement AA, student use of AA and issues with FE colleges. These issues were highlighted when the interviewees were answering Q7,10,11 and 12.

3.11.1 The implementation of AA for students in centres

An important issue that arose from the interviews is the funding needed to implement AA: to provide invigilators, readers and scribes; to supply computers for students taking examinations on a laptop. Q7 of the interview schedule asked if resources ever limited the participant's ability to assess and provide for AA. Seven respondents reported that purchasing the psychometric tests to assess for AA is prohibitive, as they are expensive, especially when they need updating. Nine participants said there was an issue with finding the time to assess. Three interviewees commented on both the expense of tests and the time to assess. Whereas, three suggested that money is a concern when it comes to supplying resources, such as staff to invigilate, to act as readers and scribes for students in public examinations.

> "Staffing definitely. Sometimes we don't have enough staff to deliver the AA. Also, the training is expensive." (Shelly)

Another SENCO said they work in a small school and that

> "More and more requests are coming for separate rooms. [..] issues with finding invigilators. It's costly putting in all the AA requirements for exams but I ignore the costs and focus on the pupils." (Stella)

The JCQ now stipulates that centres must present certificates when being inspected to verify that staff have been trained to be invigilators, readers, and scribes. This is an additional expense for centres. Communicate-ed are helping centres with this requirement with reasonably priced courses that can be delivered to unlimited people via online training. Currently, to train invigilators, they are charging £60 and to train readers and scribes, they are charging £70 (figures as of January, 2020).

Five respondents said that implementation for AA in their centres was not an issue as they were well resourced in terms of assessment kit and experienced professionals to assist during examination periods. One SENCO who had 57 EHCPs on her register said she was well resourced. Another interviewee explained her views

> "I have a whole raft of tools, but I guess if you are in a school with a limited budget, it would be limiting." (Samantha)

3.11.2 Student involvement in using their AAs

A further question is whether students are given sufficient opportunity to practise their AA. They need to experience how they benefit from them in a timed situation, such as an internal examination. An interviewee stated

> "Children need training…more emphasis is needed on supporting children to use AA to train them how to use a reader and scribe etc". (Samantha)

The assessor gave the example of a student who had just been assessed. The girl had asked the assessor what she could use her extra time for. The assessor explained that she may use it to edit her work. She came back later to ask what editing meant. Another SENCO explained that students need to consider how the extra time

in an exam may impact their daily schedule, for example by checking the bus timetable for the day. The SENCO also said, if they have been offered the use of a laptop, they must practise this in exam conditions, as school laptops may have different keyboards from their own laptops. Small, logistical processes need to be thought through and resolved before public examinations take place.

3.11.3 Issues for FE colleges

One of the most striking issues that came to light was to do with FE colleges, from the three FE SENCOs. Suki commented that assessors can only consult students about their AA, due to the new GDPR laws. The student must consent to their information being shared with their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians therefore have no input into their child's education without their child's consent. Saffron identified another area, which is the problem of identifying students with SpLDs. Some students may only have one tutor/teacher who may not recognise the student's SpLDs, and consequently may not understand their needs nor support an AA application.

3.12 Discussion

This strand of the research was conducted to answer RQ2. *How effective do SEND professionals think the current systems and practices are for AA?* Effectiveness refers to how successful this system is at delivering AA to students who meet the eligibility criteria. The following issues were raised in the interviews.

3.12.1 Workload of SENCOs – paperwork, manageability, and resources

Of the SEND professionals interviewed 52% felt that the AA system is unmanageable due to the workload. According to the responses, this is due to the excessive bureaucracy and extensive paperwork

needed for the process, the lack of specialist assessors to assess for AA and the lack resources to fund it in schools/colleges. Despite the JCQ making changes to the system in an attempt to improve it and streamline it, these changes often increase the administrative burden on centres. The recent *Report on the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) has acknowledged these issues and asked the JCQ to improve these areas (Dunford, 2019, p.176). In addition, the Bath Spa Survey (Curran et al., 2018) has also reported that 74% of SENCOs believe they do not have enough time to fulfil their role. (Curran et al., 2018, p.6). As AA is just one aspect of a SENCO's role, this is concerning.

3.12.2 AA paperwork

The SEND survey and the interview data revealed differences in how centres deal with AA paperwork. Hipkiss (2016) says that the JCQ does not provide guidelines or exemplar files for SENCOs to emulate and as a result, centres are unsure how much evidence to collect for a student. However, the PATOSS guide to AA (Castiglione, 2018) provides some exemplar forms for a centre to customise. This leads to ambiguity in the system. Some SENCOs may be spending unnecessary hours gathering considerable data on a student's normal way of working, whereas others may only have one or two pieces of evidence on file. Guidance is needed to clarify this aspect of the AA paperwork.

In addition, in order to process AA for a student, countless documents need to be completed and kept on file for JCQ inspections. Such an application will necessitate having the following on file: the student's Form 8, copies of evidence of the student's normal way of working in the centre, a signed data protection form, copies of the AA assessment and the AA online form. Compiling all this documentation is time consuming.

One particular issue that was highlighted during the interviews was the way FE colleges are affected by the AA paperwork and by the JCQ deadlines. FE colleges only have students for two years and many must put AAs in place for students early in the first term of study. FE colleges have a large proportion of candidates who have to re-sit English and Maths GCSE in the November of their first term at college due to previously having failed. English and Maths are now compulsory subjects and need to be passed to continue studying at FE and HE (DfE, 2014). This is an administrative trial for most colleges, as they have to try and get documentation from the student's previous school. This poses problems when documentation is not forthcoming. They then have to reassess the student in time for the November re-sits. One interviewee commented that many students coming to college want a fresh start, so do not declare their learning needs, which creates further issues for staff at colleges. In addition, there are issues with the BTEC exams and when they must be applied for. Woods et al. (2018) also commented on the way the FE sector is affected by JCQ administration as they have to gather information from a student's previous centre and in many instances this is not possible within the time frame of resits of GCSEs in November.

3.12.3 Form 8

Over half the interview participants stated that they completed Form 8 with all the assessment tests, whilst 11 said they only put the below-average scores. This form is supposed to be the student's passport to AA, a comprehensive view of the student's history of need and ability, so it can be transferred between centres. Current guidance states that below-average scores are only needed on this form, but this does not provide a comprehensive portrait.

3.12.4 Issues with the manageability of the AA process

The data from the interviews suggested that 12 of the respondents believed the AA process was not manageable and 11 stated it was, but their statements were qualified. It was only manageable if you had sufficient staff, there was one exam board to apply to and if you had more time. Regarding the comment on exam boards, *The Report on the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) has also noted the need for AA-online and JCQ to cover all boards and qualifications to avoid repeating applications, including at university level (Dunford, 2019, p.176).

It is evident that paperwork must be maintained on students who are awarded AA. However, there is too much repetition and overlap involving out of date forms that need amending to become more efficient. A suggestion given by one of the interviewees is to abolish Form 8 and just have the AA online as evidence for inspectors.

One of the latest changes to the JCQ regulations (September, 2018) was to have all files as e-files, but there was no guidance on how this would work in practice. In the 2019 update the JCQ said that SENCOs should only have e-files and not a mixture of e and paper files. However, they also said that if something goes wrong with the technology during an inspection the inspector must have access to the files in another format. This suggests that SENCOs must keep e-files and have a paper file as a back-up. That seems like doubling the workload. Having electronic files appears to be a good idea, but this will result in SENCOs spending time scanning documents to make them e-files, adding more time to this process. Related problems will no doubt arise from protection of rights and confidentiality.

3.12.5 Manageability in terms of Centre resources to support the AA system

The interviewees said providing for AA can be an issue in terms of allocating resources for invigilators, readers and scribes. In Woods (2007) 70% of participants stated that if resources were less of an obstacle, they would consider it appropriate to extend some AA, for example a reader (Woods, 2007, p.90). The JCQ requires evidence of training certificates for invigilators, readers and scribes. Centres have to bear the cost of training people for these positions, an additional expense that has to be factored into school budgets. Many of the interviewees in the maintained sector were concerned with providing these resources for their students, whereas those interviewed from the independent sector believed they were well resourced to supply these for their students. One SENCO from a maintained school discussed space being an issue in her centre when it came to allocate separate rooms for students suffering anxiety or needing a reader.

In addition to these challenges, many interviewees commented that the cost of buying resources for AA, such as the standardised assessment tests and record booklets was prohibitive. Many rely on group tests that have photocopiable record forms to help reduce expenditure when choosing which tests to buy. These may not necessarily be the best tests to use, but cost restrictions dictate this approach.

The SENCOs from the FE colleges also commented on the fact that many did not have qualified staff to assess students and this was causing difficulties with increased workloads.

3.13 JCQ inspections

Thirteen of the interview respondents had an annual whole school inspection that was dealt with by an examinations officer and not the SENCO. One centre had never been inspected and five were not inspected on an annual basis. There appears to be no standard inspection protocol according to the interviewee's experiences. In addition, one interviewee was having two inspections a year, one whole school and the other a specific SEN inspection. Variability in the JCQ inspection process was also highlighted in the SEND survey.

As mentioned previously, it would be beneficial, in the future, if all awarding bodies could be under one umbrella organisation to make this process more streamlined and less bureaucratic. This would save time and money for both the inspection organisations and centres.

3.14 The evidence base behind the testing for AA

Two of the interviewees mentioned the use of sub-tests from the processing tests, such as CTOPP2 and TOMAL2 to get quick results for AA. Using these sub-tests for example, is quick and easy in terms of administration and is allowed under the guidance from SASC (June 2016) to determine eligibility for AA, but using sub-tests has been called into question by Vladescue (2007). The SEND survey data revealed that DASH, CTOPP2, TOMAL2 were in the top four tests assessors said they used for AA. Dunford (2019) has also evidenced the popularity of use of these processing tests (Dunford, 2019, p.174). One surprising fact that this evidence revealed was the widespread use of the SDMT. One hundred and twenty-one respondents to the survey said they used this test and four interviewed also said they regularly use it, as it is quick and easy to

administer. As mentioned in the Literature Review, this test was normed in the late 1960s in Omaha, Nebraska. It is an old test, which has never been renormed and purports to diagnose anything from dyslexia to brain damage. Many of the professional bodies still include this test as a recognised assessment for processing despite SASC having put a proviso on its website concerning its use. This test cannot represent the current population of the UK due to its age and where it was standardised.

Woods (2007) highlighted these issues involving the tests used for AA. Their validity and their reliability as measures to demonstrate a student's need is questionable.

3.15 The training and qualifications of SEND professionals

The data from the SEND survey indicated that many SEND professionals specialise in SEND later in their careers (please see Chapter 2, Figure 2). Seven interview participants were over the age of 51. It is probably not surprising that many do not specialise between the ages of 21-30 years as they want to concentrate on being a classroom practitioner. There is so much demand placed on classroom teachers that newly qualified teachers may not have the time to study for further qualifications or may not be aware of this specialisation route. Since the introduction of tuition fees for university (September,1998) many teachers would leave university burdened with debt, so having to pay further fees to specialise may not be financially viable.

The data suggests that people undertake SEND training often as a result of their own SEND needs or those of a close relative or family friend. Thirteen who were interviewed said they had a close relative or friend that inspired them to enter the profession and four said that they were dyslexic themselves. This is similar to the findings in Bell (2013) where 33% of those in her study had a member in the family

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with an SpLD and 9% indicated that they were, or suspected, that they had dyslexia (Bell, 2013, p.109). Many classroom teachers specialise because they want to better understand their students' learning needs and how best to support them in their subject.

Teachers like the flexibility of having a specialist qualification, as it enables them to work in different settings and with different year groups. It also offers new possibilities during periods of change, such as increased childcare demands, care of elderly relatives or retirement. This flexibility enables those with SEND qualifications to continue to teach privately and those teachers who have a relationship with a centre to continue to assess for AA.

As many specialists are in the older age bracket, plans need to be made to attract younger members into the profession. During the interviews, one of the questions raised (Q4) was how to entice younger members into the profession. Many commented that time to undertake additional training along with their full-time teaching job was too onerous for most young teachers. Many also commented that the cost of training courses was prohibitive.

Time and money were the main factors given as barriers to gaining further specialist qualifications. Many older teachers referred to the Rose Report (2009) as the last time the Government provided incentives to specialise by providing funding for the training of teachers with existing SEND providers. All the interviewees commented that government funding was needed to encourage younger teachers into the profession. *The Report of the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) states that both time and money are issues that prevent further specialisation and CPD (Dunford, 2019, p.171).

3.15.1 Qualifications for training to be an AA assessor

The interviewees commented on the qualifications for training to become an AA assessor. When discussing the new JCQ qualification, which purports to be equivalent to a Level 7 with only 100-200 hours of study, 10 of the participants stated that this qualification was not fit for purpose. According to the data from the SEND survey this qualification is highest in the maintained sector along with the SENCO qualification. This is not surprising as of 1st September, 2009 all SENCOs in the maintained sector had to complete the SENCO qualification and the investment in both time and money needed for the JCQ qualification is substantially less than to hold a Level 7 or an APC. The SENCO qualification was initially subsidised by the government and the JCQ qualification, although not inexpensive, requires fewer hours to complete than a Level 7 in SpLD.

McMurray et al. (2017) conducted research into what constitutes a Level 7 qualification, which is a post-graduate certificate working towards a Master's qualification, as they believe a misunderstanding has arisen due to the JCQ stating that AA assessors, ''must have successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment.'' (JCQ Manual, 2018, p.82). However, to hold a Level 7 you need to complete at least 600 hours of work (to gain a post-graduate certificate), far more than these new JCQ approved AA qualifications. *The Report on the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) states that a review of the qualifications needed to assess for AA should be conducted to find a way of "improving distribution of qualified assessors/access to being tested' (Dunford, 2019, p.176). McMurray et al. (2017) believe the JCQ should provide greater clarity in terms of the content and methods of assessment used in the various courses on offer (McMurray et al., 2017, p.4).

On page 77 of the JCQ Manual for AA (2019) a series of bullet points outlines what an AA assessor must have successfully completed at postgraduate level or equivalent to Level 7. One bullet point that needs to be explored further is as follows,

> "the ethical administration of testing including the ability to understand the limitation of their own skills and experience, and to define when it is necessary to refer the candidate to an alternative professional." (JCQ Manual, 2019, p.77)

Both Bell (2013) and McMurray et al. (2017) have conducted research into the prior skill level of participants applying for these specialist training courses bearing in mind that all applications were from teachers in both studies. Bell (2013) found that "many participants … had little or no knowledge of either recent research on dyslexia or an understanding of its underlying difficulties" (Bell, 2013, p.108). In McMurray et al. (2017) some participants in their study had previous qualifications in educational assessment yet failed to satisfy the criteria for assessment on the current course. They state, "the skill set required to accurately administer a high-level test is quite different from the skill set required to teach." (McMurray et al., 2017, p.12).

3.15.2 CPD the JCQ Updates

Time and money appear to be barriers to completing further specialist qualifications and for CPD according to the interview data. Every year, if you are an AA assessor and SENCO, you must update your knowledge on the annual changes the JCQ makes to AA. These updates can be conducted in person, via an interactive webinar or by reading the JCQ manual on *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.* The September 2019 updated course run by Communicate-ed cost £95 for half a day and £135 for a full day. The

half day course is for assessors that already have a working knowledge of the JCQ regulations; it assumes prior knowledge and experience. The same course via a webinar will cost £79. PATOSS charges £198 for this course which is a full day. The BDA invite their members to an interactive webinar delivered by the lead tutor at Communicate-ed. All the professional organisations offer their members discounts on these courses.

Another issue raised by the interviewees was accessibility to courses. Those who live in the Northern regions appear to have difficulty in accessing high quality CPD for AA. In order to attend the JCQ update courses, many come to London from the North of England and Scotland. They explained that it is easy to see how some schools slip through the net regarding CPD. If you are a small school in the middle of a rural area you may not have the resources to even attend a webinar, or the time to do so. You may not even be qualified to do the job you are holding. In order to overcome issues such as these, some interviewees said they had formed local groups with neighbouring schools to share best practice and knowledge about AA.

As the JCQ is an agency in charge of qualifications it is difficult to understand why SEND professionals have to pay for this updated CPD training. This should be free and paid for by the JCQ to make sure AA regulations are upheld.

The JCQ Manual on *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* is published annually and used to be delivered to all centres in the UK. A new change from September 2019 is that the document is only available online. The annual changes to the manual necessitate professional updating, ideally by attending a course or taking part in an interactive webinar. These changes take effect from the 1st September each year, so once they are announced, they must be put into immediate effect, unless stated otherwise. *The Report on*

the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice (Dunford, 2019) recommends that the JCQ offer annual training/updates to SENCOS and SLTs through a national SENCO and Headteacher database (Dunford, 2019, p.176). However, this may not be interactive enough for some, as participants may prefer face to face training as supported by interviewees.

3.15.3 CPD and the APC

The APC is considered to be the gold standard in assessment qualification. Although you do not need the APC to assess for AA you need it to assess for the DSA so it is still regarded highly in the SpLD community. As of February 2019, there were only 1410 assessors registered on the SASC website. There have been issues regarding renewal of this qualification which appear to have dissuaded assessors from doing so.

Out of the 23 interviewees only one of them held the APC, two were in the process of renewing it, one had failed and decided not to renew it and two explained they did not need it to do their job.

This qualification must be updated every three years and the applicant must provide evidence of continued CPD including at least five hours of CPD relating to psychometric testing. This is to conform to the SASC requirements. They must also provide an anonymised assessment report.

Time is one of the major elements deterring assessors from renewing their APC as is the fact it is not a requirement for assessing AA. One interviewee commented that there is a lack of qualified assessors in schools and that is why outside assessors are brought in even though this is contrary to current JCQ guidelines. This is borne out by the data collected from the SEND survey where 66% of respondents indicated they use an outside assessor in their centre.

3.16 Interview Summary Findings

3.16.1 Workload

Twelve of the interviewees believed that the workload for administering AA is unmanageable and the other 11 believe it is only manageable if you have sufficient qualified staff, resources and time to dedicate to the process. The process of assessing, implementing and applying for AA is substantial and this is just one aspect of a SENCO's role.

3.16.2 JCQ Inspections

The interviewees all had experiences with dealing with JCQ inspections. Some are inspected annually and some less frequently. The interviewees related their stories about inspections and have concerns about the knowledge of inspectors and their qualifications, the manner in which they approach inspections and the fact that centres experience multiple inspections from examination boards that are not currently represented by the JCQ. One of the main recommendations of the interviewees would be to have one organisation that deals with all the examination boards in the UK and for that body to stipulate the guidance on AA. This should reduce paperwork and confusion.

3.16.3 Evidence behind AAs

Although there was not a direct question about this in the interview schedule two of the interviewees commented on the use of the quick processing tests available to assessors to use for AA. Data from the SEND survey and Dunsford's (2019) report indicate that the quick processing tests are the most popular tests AA assessors use.

3.16.4 The training and qualifications of SEND professionals

Q6 asked the interviewees about the new JCQ qualifications to assess and what they felt about only having 100 hours' worth of

training to qualify to be an AA assessor. Ten of the participants said these qualifications were not fit for purpose. They did not believe these assessors would have enough experience to do the job. The data from the survey revealed that many in the maintained sector have this qualification as opposed to a Level 7 or APC. The literature has revealed concerns about the knowledge of participants taking these courses (McMurray et al., 2017: Bell, 2013).

3.16.5 Other issues that came to light

Other issues that have been revealed concern the implementation of AA for students. The survey data suggested that only a small proportion (4%) of those who answered the question on the evidence they provide for an AA application mentioned that they use student data. However, the interviewees all stated they use student data, as they consult their students to explain the AAs available to them. The discrepancy between the survey and the interviews could be down to the wording of the questions. In order to gather students' views on AA, some SENCOs make feedback forms that the student signs in recognition of their understanding of the process. Some provide sessions on how to use AA in an examination, so that the students can trial their arrangements and some use TAs to explain AAs to students. Another concern that became evident was to do with centre resources. It seems clear that how well AA can be delivered will depend on a centre's resources. During public examination periods centres may need additional IT equipment, individual rooms and they may also need to bring in invigilators, readers and scribes. These are all added costs that may not be possible if a centre has restricted resource capacity.

Finally, one of the most pressing issues that was highlighted was to do with FE colleges and their issues with new students. FE Colleges have to have a 'working relationship' (JCQ, 2019) with their feeder centres to accept Form 8. This poses many issues when new

students arrive, if they come from schools that the College does not have a 'working relationship' with, in terms of trying to identify students who need AA, assessing students and making sure their arrangements are in place for November resits if they have to retake English and Maths GCSE. This is an area fraught with complications due to the JCQ guidelines.

4. Strand Three - A Small-scale Survey of Stakeholder Views: Dyslexic Students, their Parents/Guardians and SENCOs

4.1 Aims

The aim of this strand was to collect data on students who have a specific reading difficulty, to ascertain how different schools use AA or a combination of AAs to remove barriers and support these students when taking tests and public examinations. The *Literature Review* (section 1) revealed that there is a lack of information on the experiences of AA on the part of students, their families and education professionals (Elliot and Marquart, 2004). Woods et al. (2010) conducted a study of the AA system with 86 students with disabilities to ascertain their experiences, as well as those of their parents/carers and teachers. Woods et al. (2010) concluded there was a lack of monitoring of the experiences of these stakeholders and participants believed you would only be supported if you had a label, such as being dyslexic.

This strand of the study was to address stakeholders' views. It was designed to answer Research Question 3. *How do SENCOs interpret the guidelines for students with reading difficulties? What are the views of students who have AA for their reading issue and the views of parents who have children with reading difficulties?* It involved collecting questionnaire responses from students who have a reading difficulty, SENCOs involved in administering AAs at the student's schools and parents/guardians of the students. Although the other two strands of this research surveyed SENCO's experiences of AA, this survey of SENCOs was dedicated to how they implement AA for students with specific reading difficulties, so the questions were solely directed at that issue. This strand has

given all stakeholders involved in AA an opportunity, or a *voice,* to explain their experiences.

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Participants

Five schools located in the South East of England and London participated in the study, two maintained secondary schools, one senior special school, and two independent senior schools. An attempt was made to survey the full spectrum of provision, however, the FE college sector is not represented. Each school SENCO was asked to identify a student who had AA, due to their specific reading difficulty, and their parents/guardians, to see if they would participate in this study.

Questionnaires were used for this strand of the study, as they were considered to be the most appropriate way to ascertain views from the three individual groups participating in this research. This is due to the fact that the SENCOs were involved in choosing the students and their parents. They were used for convenience, as the researcher had to be guided by the individual school's SENCO to select pupils and their parents/guardians.

Four students from the five participating schools completed a questionnaire on their reading difficulties and what AAs were in place. The students were aged between 15 and 18 years old and were either completing GSCE or A-levels. Five SENCOs, one at each school, also completed questionnaires. Parent/guardian questionnaires came from four of the five schools with two parents/guardians completing questionnaires in one school, but only one pupil from that school completed the questionnaire. Tables 19, 20 and 21 provide background data on the student, parent/guardian and SENCO participants respectively.

Table 16

Students who Participated in the Stakeholder Views Study

Centre Type	Name	Officially diagnosed as being dyslexic	GCSE/ A-level	AA
Senior School Maintained	Pat	No	GCSE	25% ET, reading pen
Senior School Independent	Paula	Yes	A-level	25% ET, PDF reader, laptop
Senior School Maintained	Pamela	Yes	GCSE	25% ET, laptop
Senior School Specialist - Independent	Patrick	Yes	GCSE	50% ET human/computer reader, laptop, scribe, own room rest breaks

Note: ET = Extra time

Table 17

Parents/guardians who Participated in the Stakeholder Views Study

Centre Type	Name	When was reading identified as an issue	Do you believe AA support your child?
Senior School Independent	Sky	Primary school	Definitely yes
Senior School Independent	Oakley	Primary school	Definitely yes
Senior School Independent	Frankie	Secondary school	Definitely yes
Senior School Maintained	Justice	Primary school	Definitely yes
Senior School Specialist - Independent	Charlie	Primary school	Definitely yes

Table 18

SENCOs who Participated in the Stakeholder Views Study

Centre Type	Name	Centre Size - Approximate Number of Students
Senior School Independent	Tammy	650
Senior School Maintained	Tom	750
Senior School Independent	Tracy	750
Senior School Maintained	Tara	600
Senior School Specialist - Independent	Tabetha	250

4.2.2 Materials

Three questionnaires were developed to provide information to answer Research Question 3. *How do SENCOs interpret the guidelines for students with reading difficulties? What are the views of students who have AA for their reading issue and the views of parents who have children with reading difficulties?* The questionnaires were designed using Qualtrics software (www.qualtrics.com/uk). They were sent to the schools that agreed to participate; one questionnaire was designed for the school's SENCO to complete (please see Appendix 4 - SENCO Questionnaire), one

for the student with the reading difficulty (please see Appendix 5 - Student Questionnaire) and one for the parent/guardian of the student with reading difficulties (please see Appendix 6 - Parent/Guardian Questionnaire). The three questionnaires were piloted with the researcher's SEND team which comprised two experienced SEND professionals. They both agreed with the questions in the three surveys.

4.2.2.1 The SENCO Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of ten questions relating to how SENCOs interpret the AA guidelines for students with reading difficulties. The questionnaire consisted of five closed and five open-ended questions (please see Appendix 4).

The questionnaire for this strand of the research included: Q1 which asked for the name of the school; Q2 asked what standardized tests the SENCOs used to assess reading ability; Q3 asked how SENCOs determined if a student has a reading difficulty; Q4 investigated the AA used for helping poor reading issues; Q5 enquired if students who are awarded AA for reading issues accept their arrangements; Q6 and Q7 respectively, asked how many GSCE pupils in their school had AA for reading difficulties and how many A-level pupils had AA for reading difficulties; Q8 enquired about resources to provide for pupils' reading difficulties for AA; Q9 asked if the SENCOs felt the arrangements made a difference to the student in terms of their ability to access the material being assessed and Q10 asked the SENCOs if they were able to share anonymised data that demonstrated AAs for reading difficulties made a difference to a student's marks in exams. The questions were aimed at examining how closely the SENCO worked with a student to determine their AAs for reading and to see whether the range of AAs that support reading was being offered.

4.2.2.2 The Student Questionnaire

The Student questionnaire consisted of seventeen questions in relation to AAs to understand the views of students who have AA for their reading issue. As this aspect of the research was conducted with pupils with reading difficulties the language used for the questionnaire was simplified and there were many drop down menus to choose from. This questionnaire would have also been easily read with reading software on any electronic device, so it was accessible. In addition, the researcher understood that these pupils were all entered into GCSE and A-Level examinations, so a prerequisite level of understanding was assumed when devising this survey. This questionnaire was comprised of thirteen closed and four open-ended questions (please see Appendix 5). Questions for this survey included: Q1 the name of the school; Q2 asked the student what difficulties they felt they had when taking exams; Q3 enquired whether the students received extra support in school; Q4 asked if they received help, to state how it made a difference; Q5 asked if the students received support in primary school; Q6 enquired if the students had an official diagnosis, such as dyslexia; Q7 enquired how their reading difficulty had impacted on their studies; Q8 asked if their friends had ever made comments about their reading difficulties; Q9 asked what AA they had been awarded; Q10 enquired if the AA helped the students when taking exams; Q11 asked if they received the same AA for all their subjects; Q12 asked if they could complete exams without AA to demonstrate their ability; Q13 investigated how supportive their school had been in arranging AA for their reading difficulty; Q14 and Q15 enquired how the students help improve their reading issues; Q16 asked if the students had chosen their subjects based on the amount of reading needed for them and finally, Q17 asked if the students would be willing to take part in a short interview.

4.2.2.3 The Parental/Guardian Questionnaire

The parent/guardian questionnaire consisted of twelve questions in relation to their child's AAs. This questionnaire consisted of nine closed and three open-ended questions (please see Appendix 6). The current survey questions were devised to garner the views of the students' closest support network, their parents/guardians. The survey questions included: Q1 Name of the school; Q2 enquired when their child was first diagnosed with their reading difficulty; Q3 and Q4 asked if their child's reading difficulty impacted on their schooling and if so, how; Q5 and Q6 enquired if their child's reading difficulty had impacted on their self-esteem and if so, how; Q7 asked if their child had specialist support at primary school for reading difficulties; Q8 enquired if their child received AA in primary school; Q9 enquired if their child received specialist support in school for their reading difficulty; Q10 asked what AAs were in place when taking examinations; Q11 enquired whether parents/guardians believed these arrangements supported their child when taking examinations and finally, Q12 asked if the respondent would be willing to participate in a short interview.

4.2.3 Procedure

Information letters and consent forms were sent to the SENCOs in the participating schools (please see Appendix 7 - School Consent Letters). The school's SENCO sent these letters to the participating student and their parents/guardians for permission to participate. Once the individual school SENCOs had their permission letters returned the SENCOs were sent the Qualtrics links to the three individual surveys for them to distribute to their participants. The SENCOs then informed the researcher that the links were sent. The SENCOs were thanked via emails for helping to conduct the study.

4.2.3.1 Analysis of the Data

It was decided to report the responses to the individual questions in each survey as there were only five participants for the SENCO and parental/guardian surveys and four for the student survey. The majority of the questions were closed questions with some open questions to further explore the closed questions. The survey questions provided both quantitative and qualitative data.

4.2.4 Ethical Considerations

The main ethical consideration with this phase was anonymity especially as the students were all of school age. It may be that some participants, particularly the students, may have felt anxious or uneasy when completing the survey on their reading issues. They may have also felt pressure to complete the survey, as their SENCO asked them to participate. In order to mitigate this, SENCOs reassured their students that participation was voluntary and there would be no repercussions if they chose not to contribute. Some parents/guardians may have experienced anxiety about completing their survey, as it may have reminded them about their child's struggle with reading. Again, SENCOs confirmed to parents that their participation was voluntary and that there was no pressure to participate. Consent letters outlining the aims of the study were sent to the school SENCO to distribute to their chosen students and parents/guardians (please see Appendix 7 - Survey Permission letters). These letters stated that all data collected would be anonymous in the final write-up of the study and that the results would be disseminated to them once the study was completed if they wished to see them. They were informed that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that even if they consented to take part in the study, they may withdraw at any time without incurring any consequences.

4.3 Results

The study was devised to see how stakeholders felt that AAs helped remove barriers for dyslexic students when taking a public examination. The results gained from each survey are presented next.

4.3.1 The SENCO Survey

The SENCO responses to Q2 and Q3 on the type of testing used to highlight reading issues revealed that all the five schools conduct whole-school baseline testing of reading. If individual students are identified in this testing, specialist assessments such as the YARC, WIAT2/3, WRAT4/5 are then conducted to confirm if there is an issue and the results of these will help to determine the type of AA that needs to be put in place to support reading. It is interesting to note that when asked how the SENCOs first determine a student has a reading difficulty (Q3) that the two maintained schools did not choose from the drop-down menu *parent* and *pupil referrals*. Tom did not mark down *pupil* and *parental referrals* and Tara did not mark down *pupil referrals*. In answer to Q4 all the SENCOs stated that they provide a range of support for exams, including: a human reader, computer reader, the use of a reader pen, the use of own room in case they wish to read aloud, coloured overlay, 25% extra time or a combination of these arrangements. However, Tom stated that he did not provide the PDF/computer reader and Tara stated that she did not provide a human reader, but she has plans to introduce the reader pen. In answer to Q5 all respondents felt that students who use their AA for reading benefit from this. For Q6 and Q7 both GCSE and A-Level candidates are given specific arrangements for reading in their schools. Tammy supports fewer than ten students at A-Level; she did not have any students who needed this at GCSE. Tom said that he supported 16 students at GCSE and none at A-Level. Tara supported 15 at GCSE and none at A-level, Tracy supported one at GCSE and three at A-level and Tabetha supported all her students at

GCSE based on their speech language and communication needs (SLCN); her school finishes at GCSE. It is interesting to note that Tom has 15 students he supports at GCSE and he does not use computer readers; he is still reliant on a human reader which will have a cost implication in terms of resources. Q8 enquired about resources available for AA and it was only Tom who believed he probably did not have the resources to effectively administer the arrangements. Tara believed that she probably did have the resources, whilst the other three stated that they definitely had the resources. These three are all from the independent sector. All the SENCOs agreed that AAs made a difference to the students being able to access material being assessed (Q9). Q10 asked if the SENCOs were willing to share anonymised data that demonstrated AA was making a difference to the student's examination marks. Only one SENCO agreed to do this.

4.3.2 Student Survey

Four students responded to the survey. Below are the difficulties they have when completing exams this was in answer to Q2.

> "writing for long periods of time, maintaining concentration, understanding what the question is asking." Whilst three participants additionally said, "reading the paper." (Paula, Pamela & Patrick)

Paula, Pamela and Patrick receive regular specialist help at school whilst Pat receives this sometimes, only when in need of help (Q3). The three that receive regular support in answer to Q4, commented

> "It helps with my wrighting and my spelling and I have it in a sertain font that I can read it back after." (as written by the student) (Pamela)

"It has helped me understand the rules of spelling and manage my time better." (Paula)

"I can focus better and it is more focused around me and not the whole class." (Patrick)

However, Pat, who only receives support when she needs help states,

"I do receive some extra support but it's not what I need to help me and make me understand what I need to do."

Only Patrick received specialist support at primary school; the other three did not (Q5).

In answer to Q6, Paula, Pamela and Patrick have been diagnosed with a SpLD and Pat has not. Pat's comment about support appears to suggest that her support may not be targeted enough to make a difference to her understanding. It may be that Pat needs to be formally assessed, in order to provide more targeted and differentiated support.

Q7 asked how their reading difficulty has impacted their studies, they stated

"I struggle to maintain focus when reading and learning and also struggle to learn." (Pat)

"I find it quite difficult to read questions in exams and read notes the teacher gives me in lesson and fully understand it." (Paula)

"It means that I am a lot slower than most people. I don't understand, and I have to ask people for help a lot of the time." (Pamela)

> "I have to have so many adaptions to be able to cope; I've had dyslexia since being in Year 1; it isolated me a lot in my primary school because I was always the one that was different' I had to have a support worker to help me read also it affects your confidence and belief in yourself." (Patrick)

In answer to Q8 asking whether their friends ever made comments about their reading difficulty, everyone apart from Pamela stated *yes* that their friends commented. Pamela only stated that *sometimes* she receives comments.

Q9 asked what types of AA they receive for reading, please refer to Table 19. When answering Q10 all the students believed that AA helped them when taking examinations. It was only Pat who said 'sometimes' they help. Three of the students receive the same AA for all their subjects whereas Patrick does not (Q11). When asked if they believed they could complete their exams without their AA (Q12), Paula, Pamela and Patrick said *definitely not* and Pat said *probably not*.

Answering Q13 which asked if they thought their school had been supportive in helping them get the correct AAs for them, Pat and Patrick stated *not very*, Paula stated *very* and Pamela said

> "Middle - with the old teacher for Learning difficultys she was not very helpful but with the new teacher things have got a lot better." (student's own spelling)

In answer to Q14 and Q15 when asked what they do to help improve their reading issues the students gave a variety of responses. Pat read aloud, Paula turns documents into PDFs to enable the PDF reader facility and attends specific lessons to target her reading issues. Pamela reads whilst listening to audio books and Patrick

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uses reading software on his computer and phone to access information and the reading pen.

When asked if the students chose their subjects based on the amount of reading they thought was needed (Q16), Pat and Paula said *definitely yes*, Pamela said *might or might not* and Patrick said *definitely not*. It is interesting to note that Patrick, despite being at a special school, was not deterred from taking subjects that required extensive reading. This may be because the AA that were in place, supported him so well, that he felt confident in tackling subjects which required extensive reading.

Three of the pupils said they would be willing to participate in an interview (Q17).

4.3.3 The Parent/guardian Survey

Q2 asked when their child's reading difficulties were first identified and four out of five respondents said this was in primary school. All the respondents said that their child's reading difficulties had impacted on their schooling (Q3). To provide more qualitative data with regard to how the students' reading difficulties impacted their schooling, Q4 asked respondents to explain further. They commented

"He has to work harder and longer to achieve results" (Sky)

"She has a lack of confidence in her ability. She feels she is stupid." (Oakley)

"Generally slower to get through the work expected of her during class time." (Frankie)

"He cannot access the curriculum without a lot of support. He needs to use the reader on his computer and uses a reading pen." (Charlie)

Q5 and Q6 enquired if their child's reading difficulty had impacted on their self-esteem; they all commented that it had.

"Hugely. She gets very frustrated and feels she is thick." (Sky)

"My daughter felt she was stupid." (Frankie)

"He feels embarrassed with his peers and generally lacks confidence when doing any schoolwork or having to fill forms out." (Charlie)

Three out of the five did not receive AA in primary school when taking tests (Q8) despite receiving specialist support in school (Q7). All four children were currently receiving specialist support in their senior school (Q9). Q10 asked the types of AA the children receive and these can be found in Table 19 and in response to Q11 all parents said that they felt their child's AA 'definitely' helps remove barriers when taking examinations.

4.4 Discussion

The survey was conducted to understand the views of all stakeholders involved in AA in terms of supporting students with specific reading difficulties. Its aim was to gather views from SENCOs, students and their parents/guardians.

This study was designed to investigate how students with reading difficulties are awarded AA, use their AA when sitting public examinations and how they feel about their reading issues. Good practice in educational reform is to include the views of students in decision making (Elwood, 2013; Woods et al., 2018; Hipkiss, 2016;

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Elliot & Marquart, 2004). The study also provided further context to how educational professionals administer and support students with SpLDs and how students respond to their SpLDs and AAs.

By looking at the responses of the three groups in the study: the student, the SENCO and the parent/guardian, a fuller understanding of how AAs may remove barriers for students can be gained. This study was viewed through Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model (2005) to encompass the effects of the professional organisations and support networks on the delivery of AA to students with reading difficulties. All of the SEND professionals surveyed agreed that AA was beneficial for their students with reading difficulties. All the parents/guardians surveyed also agreed AA was beneficial for their children and the majority of the students said that their AAs were helpful when sitting public examinations.

4.4.1 SENCOs

The SENCOs in this study interpreted the AA guidelines, as stipulated by the JCQ (2019), for students with reading difficulties by using the range of support available for this group. They provided extra time, human or computer readers, reader pens, PDF reading facility and reading software to support students. This ability to adjust AA to a student's individual needs, by providing a combination of tailored AA, is one of the strengths of the system. However, it relies on resources and qualified staff to engage in this strength. These aspects have been identified by other researchers (Woods et al., 2018; Williams, 2017; Dunford, 2019). In this study it was the independent school SENCOs who stated that they had the resources to provide this type of tailored AA. Tom in the maintained sector said he did not. Tara, also in the maintained sector, stated she probably did, possibly indicating that Tara is working within tight margins, to provide support for students.

All the SENCOs agreed that these arrangements make a difference to the students in terms of being able to demonstrate their ability level in public examinations. All of their students use the arrangements they have been awarded.

The information provided by the SENCOs in this strand has given further insight into AA issues. Out of the five SENCOs who participated, it appears that it is the maintained sector SENCOs who may lack resources to implement AA. Both Tom and Tara seem to rely on human readers in examinations rather than PDF and computer readers. This may result from having a lack of IT resources. In addition, Tom and Tara also possibly do not have the time to gather or deal with pupil and parental referrals when it comes to assessing for AA. The SENCO survey confirms the data from both the SEND Professionals' Survey and interview data

4.4.2 Students' Responses

Insights into how students cope in class, when taking tests or end of term/year examinations is important information for those involved in awarding AA as evidenced in the Tyrell and Woods (2018) study investigating students with ASD. Their study showed that tailoring AA to support students' individual needs was beneficial to their self-esteem and emotional well-being. Investigating what the students reported as their difficulties when taking exams, three out of four commented: writing for long periods of time, maintaining concentration and understanding what the question was asking.

The students were also asked how their reading difficulty had impacted on their studies. They stated issues with focus, reading and fully understanding questions in exams and notes in class. They said they are slower than most in class and that they have to ask for help

a lot of the time and one said he has to have so many adaptions to help him cope. They all agreed that they probably could not complete an examination without their AAs in place. They all believed that their arrangements were beneficial to them.

4.4.3 Parents/Guardians

All respondents felt that their child's reading difficulties had impacted on their schooling. They made comments about their children working harder and longer to achieve their results. In addition, the parents/guardians said that the reading difficulty had impacted on their children's self-esteem. Comments such as they feel frustrated, stupid, thick, embarrassed and lack confidence all suggest that these students carry a lot of residual emotional issues as a result of their difficulties. The parents/guardians stated that their children were currently receiving specialist support in their senior school and that their child's AA 'definitely' supports them when taking examinations.

4.5 Summary

The surveys provide an insight into stakeholder's views concerning students with reading difficulties and how AAs help to remove barriers for these students when taking public examinations. The views from the SENCOs on how they interpret the AA guidelines for students with reading difficulties and the views of parents/guardians lie within the Support Networks or Microsystems of the student when referring to Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (2005). This system has the most immediate effect or impact on students who are at the centre of this model. Woods et al. (2018) state "dialogue with students about their educational assessment… is a means to promote transparency and build trust between stakeholders" (2018, p.11).

The findings of Woods et al. (2010), Tyrell and Woods (2018) and the present study indicate that when all stakeholders work together to

tailor AA to individual students, they receive optimal support to remove barriers when taking public examinations. This was also the view of Wadley and Liljequists (2013) study based on their research into students with ADHD. They believed that understanding the effects of AA on students with ADHD would enable future adjustments that were more appropriate. This is similar to Woods et al. (2010) when they say that "an individualised, 'trialling' approach to (AA) management is required to match provision to student's needs." (2010, p.28).

However, in order to achieve this, SENCOs need expertise and time. In this study three SENCOs had the resources to implement AA needed for their students, as these three worked in the independent sector. They were in a privileged position compared to the two SENCOs from the maintained sector.

5. Discussion

This study set out to examine the current system for AAs. A review of the literature revealed a number of areas of current concern. These included the manageability of the AA process, especially with regard to staff workload and regulation of the process, preparation of assessors, the integrity of the assessment process, the evidence base supporting AAs, and the lack of stakeholder voice. The mixed methods research involved surveys and a questionnaire. The aim was to examine how centres provide for AAs, how SEND professionals view the current effectiveness of the system and how students with reading difficulties use AA. Three research questions were devised to investigate the AA system to ascertain if this process is student centred in terms of the theoretical model employed for this research, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (2005).

Research Q1 – What are the existing practices for Access Arrangements in Secondary Schools and how do SEND professionals implement these arrangements?

Research Q2 – How effective do SEND professionals think the current systems and practices are for AA?

Research Q3 –How do SENCOs interpret the guidelines for students with specific reading difficulties? What are the views of students who have AA for their reading issue and the views of parents/guardians who have children with reading difficulties?

This chapter will outline the findings of three strands of the research in relation to the background literature. The majority of the SEND professionals surveyed and interviewed agreed that AAs benefit students with SpLDs when taking public examinations. Despite this, there appear to be a number of concerns with the system. In the

second part of the chapter suggested solutions, or paths to overcome difficulties, are put forward.

5.1 Strand 1 - The SEND Professionals' Survey

The survey, conducted with 513 SEND professionals, collected views with regard to: the workload of SENCOs, the annual changes made by the JCQ, the tests used by assessors and the training and qualifications to become an AA assessor. In addition, responses highlighted a lack of student participation in deciding their AA and a discrepancy between the maintained and independent centres in terms of qualified SEND professionals. These issues are discussed next.

5.1.1 Workload

The SEND survey data highlighted the workload that SENCOs face when having to administer and implement AA for their students. A SENCO usually has other positions of responsibility in a centre, such as a being a class teacher, as well as having to be in charge of all the SEND pupils in their centre. When asked what other positions of responsibility SENCOs had in their centre responses revealed that SEND professionals in the independent sector generally have fewer positions of responsibility than their counterparts in the maintained sector: 9% of participants in the independent sector held the position of SENCO plus being a class teacher and holding one other position of responsibility, for the maintained sector the figure was 25%, which may suggest manpower is stretched in this sector. Lack of time is something Curran et al. (2018) have identified as an issue for SENCOs. One of the interviewee's commented that the job was constantly changing and it is a full-time job but only part of what he does.

The paperwork for the AA process is extensive and has been termed burdensome by Woods (2010) and Woods et al. (2018). There is ambiguity in terms of the amount of evidence needed for each student, which causes some centres to spend more time collecting paperwork than others. The SEND survey revealed that most SENCOs collect between two to four samples of evidence, but some stated they only kept one to two samples on file. This adds to the workload when the requirements are not specified, as centres are guessing at how much evidence an inspector requires.

In addition, there are issues with the wording of some of the requirements to complete this paperwork, vague descriptors, create additional work as centres interpret the guidance differently.

5.1.2 JCQ Annual Changes

The JCQ amends AA regulations annually and this creates work for centres. Changes usually have to be made by the 1st September of each academic year and often mean that SENCOs and centres need to alter documentation and processes. In order to keep abreast of these changes, SEND professionals can attend a face to face update session with one of the professional organisations, attend a webinar or read the guidance themselves. 94% of respondents to the survey stated that they updated their knowledge annually.

The inspection process also adds to the administrative burden of this system as the JCQ does not act on behalf of all examination boards. SENCOs may have to produce paperwork for many different boards and be subjected to inspections from multiple examination boards.

5.1.3 Tests used to assess eligibility for AA and evidence base for specific AAs

In the SEND survey respondents were asked to list the tests they most frequently use to assess for AA (Chapter 2, section 4).

Responses revealed that many were using the speedy processing tests to award AA, such as the CTOPP2, TOWRE2, TOMAL2 and the DASH freewriting. These tests are comprised of sub-tests which are permitted to be used as evidence for AA. Vladescue (2007) argues that using sub-test scores is not as reliable as using composite scores. In the recent report of Dunford (2019) it is confirmed that these are the most popular tests SENCOs are using (Dunford, 2019, p. 174). However, what the evidence does not reveal is if assessors are using these tests in conjunction with a reading test or combination of tests, as a student only needs to have one below-average processing score in conjunction with teacher evidence to obtain AA for a public examination. The data from the SEND survey also revealed that many assessors are using out of date tests which is concerning.

Issues with the validity and reliability of the tests used for AA were raised in the literature. Many of the tests are from America and standardised in the USA, and so the normative data may not be appropriate for UK populations (Smythe, 2014).

With regard to the evidence-base that supports the extra time awards of 25% and 50%, 54% of participants believed that this was supported by evidence-based research. 46% of respondents were unsure, or said it was not, suggesting that nearly half of respondents to the survey believe this system is not driven by evidence-based studies, questioning its validity as a system to remove barriers for students with SpLDs. The literature has also revealed these concerns. There appear to be no studies that suggest these time awards benefit all students with SpLDs, for example Wadley and Liljequist (2013) suggest that extra time may not be the most beneficial for students with ADHD. They may be better accommodated by having a room of their own or noise cancelling headphones to limit distractions. These time awards appear to be blanket arrangements which have possibly been implemented as

cost effective measures and for administrative purposes (Duncan & Purcell, 2017). Duncan and Purcell (2017) suggest that these time awards assume "a degree of homogeneity across all students with SpLD (2017, p.7)," explaining that this is a 'one size fits all approach' that will suit everyone's needs. Peacey and Peacey (2007) state "there is no one-to-one relationship between an identified SEN and the appropriate adjustment for an individual" (2007, p.6). Studies are lacking in this area which demonstrate that specific SpLDs benefit from AA. However, studies have shown that AA extra time awards can be beneficial to students, as it helps them lower their anxiety levels and this may have a positive effect when taking exams (Sokal & Vermette, 2017).

5.1.4 Assessor Qualifications and Training

The survey data (Chapter 2, section 5) revealed that there were more SEND professionals among respondents from the independent than the maintained sector. If this result is representative of the wider population then this may lead to inequality of provision when it comes to identifying and assessing students who need AA. The survey data also revealed that 66% of centres used outside assessors to assess for AA. Again, if this is representative of the general population it is concerning. The JCQ guidance states that ideally assessors must be employed within the centre. This may be the result of a lack of qualified SEND professionals in the maintained sector to assess. It may also be an additional consequence of the maintained SENCO's workload, that assessing may be too burdensome on top of their other positions of responsibility.

The survey data revealed that the maintained sector has more SEND professionals who hold the new JCQ qualifications to assess, which provide assessors a qualification 'equivalent to a Level 7' (Chapter 2, section 5). The literature review revealed concerns over the courses

on offer to become an AA assessor. These were also reflected in the interview responses in Chapter 3, section 9. There is ambiguity when it comes to courses claiming they are 'equivalent to a Level 7' qualification when a Level 7 qualification takes 600 hours of study and the majority of the courses on offer to become an AA assessor are between 100-200 hours of study (McMurray et al. 2017). Some only need 100 hours, such as the PAPPA, some need 200 hours, such as the AAA and some need 600 hours, such as the OCR Level 7 in SpLD. This discrepancy between the courses is problematic and could lead to inequality of provision for students needing an assessment for AA. Furthermore, Bell (2013) and McMurray et al. (2017) have suggested that prior knowledge/qualifications of the participants of these courses may be insufficient.

There is also a further ethical issue to consider; that of SEND organisations promoting their own qualifications. These qualifications provide a revenue stream for the professional organisations. This issue has been recognised by the JCQ as the *JCQ Interim Progress Report in response to the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice* (JCQ, 2019) is now investigating whether to develop its own training or accredit training. Further consultation awaits in 2020 (JCQ, 2019, p.8)

5.1.5 The Stakeholder's Voice

The survey data revealed that many SEND professionals do not consult students when arranging AA (Chapter 3, section 10). The survey question asked the types of evidence collected to support an AA and only 18 participants said they had student evidence and 17 parent/guardian evidence. Woods et al. (2018) suggested that there is a lack of stakeholder input when determining AA.

5.2 Strand 2 – The SEND Professional Interviews

To investigate the issues from the survey, interviews were conducted with 23 SEND professionals covering the areas of SENCO workload, JCQ inspections, training and qualifications, the evidence behind AA and the student voice.

5.2.1 Workload and Administration of AA

A particular aspect of the workload for AA was questioned in this strand, Form 8 (Chapter 3, section 5.4). This is the student's passport to AA and it is 10 pages long, outlining the history of need of the student and the tests used to determine eligibility for AA. Guidance on how to complete this form has changed. Initially, all assessment scores were to be included on this form, but now the JCQ require only the below average standard scores to be recorded. This seems to reduce the usefulness of this form. It is considered a 'pen portrait' of the student and can be transferred between centres. 52% of the interviewees said they provide a complete record of testing and the remainder, 48%, said they completed it as per the current JCQ guidance, as it saves time. Many centres find this form burdensome to complete, as it uses outdated technology. Dunford (2019) states Form 8 is "considered excessive by SENCOs…. long and repetitive… and this could be simplified" (Dunford, 2019, p.78).

In addition, the three SENCOs from FE colleges highlighted the issues with transferring this form when a student moves centres (Chapter 3, section 5.4). If the college does not have a 'working relationship' with the senior school, Form 8 has to be redone causing those in FE further administrative burden. FE colleges, as opposed to senior schools, deal with many thousands of pupils and redoing Form 8s seems to be unnecessary administration. The current guidance on transferring Form 8 between centres is ambiguous and this can lead to centres spending more time on administration.

"A FE College or a Sixth Form College must have established working relationships with feeder schools in order for the Form 8 to be rolled forward from GCSE to GCE qualifications" (JCQ, 2018-19, p.87).

Centres have to understand what is meant by a 'working relationship'. Is it an email correspondence about a prospective student, is it a face to face meeting, or something else? It was clear from the SEND interviews and the research carried out by Woods et al. (2018) that one of the main issues FE colleges face is their inability to get Form 8s from other centres for new students joining them after GCSEs.

The interviews also highlighted the JCQ annual changes as a factor which make the workload and administration of AA problematic, as centres must keep abreast of changes to policy and documentary evidence (Chapter 3, section 5). Comments, such as `the workload is huge and if you are not experienced in admin the job can be overwhelming` reveal this issue.

Three interviews suggested the need for there to be one organisation that encompasses all the awarding bodies in the UK. Currently, the JCQ encompasses only eight of the awarding bodies. This causes further administration if multiple applications have to be made to different awarding bodies for a student. There is also a problem with inconsistency in terms of criteria between the awarding bodies when it comes to AA. Scarlet explained that you are not allowed to use technology for an entry level qualification, but you are allowed to use Read and Write Gold software for a functional skills examination. These differing criteria make it difficult to explain decisions about the use of technology to students and parents/guardians.

The interviews stated that resources for AA were an issue in terms of administration (Chapter 3, section 5.5). 30% reported that purchasing

psychometric tests to assess for AA was prohibitive, as they are expensive, especially when they need updating. 39% said there was an issue with finding the time to assess. 13% commented on both the expense of tests and the time to assess. 35% said that they were well resourced; these included a local authority assessor, two private assessors, three independent schools, one maintained school with funding from 57 EHCPs and one who worked for a school trust. They were well resourced in terms of having up-to-date AA testing materials and the physical resources needed to accommodate students, such as IT and extra rooms, in addition to having specialist support in their centre.

5.2.2 JCQ Inspections

When asked about the JCQ inspection process many of the interviewees had concerns (Chapter 3, section 6). These ranged from inspectors not being consistent in the documentation they were asking for, concerns over the qualification of inspectors, having to deal with overly officious inspectors and discrepancies in terms of the regularity that some centres were being inspected. The data from the survey suggests that the independent sector is being inspected more than the maintained. There may be a perceived bias by the JCQ that independent schools appear to have more students being identified as eligible for AA than their maintained counterparts, but this may be due to them having more SEND professionals in their centres to identify issues.

5.2.3 Training and Qualifications of Assessors

The interviews addressed the area of the new JCQ 'equivalent to a Level 7' qualification as they were concerned with its rigour (Chapter 3, section 15). 44% had concerns over the qualifying 100 hours and the knowledge of some of these professionals with regard to assessing for AA. However,30% believed this qualification was sufficient to assess for AA.

5.2.4 Assessments for Eligibility for AA

All those who were interviewed agreed that AA was beneficial to their students. In discussion about the tests used to provide AA two interviewees were concerned about the quick processing tests being used to apply for AA (Chapter 3, section 8). 39% of the interviewees conducted baseline assessments to determine if further assessment was needed for AA. The further assessments included many of the quick processing and group tests, such as the SDMT, the DASH free writing, the WRAT spelling tests, CTOPP2 and TOMAL2. Only 26% of the interviewees mentioned the use of reading tests which included the DRA, YARC, WIATII, WRAT5, GORT4 and the ART.

5.2.5 Student Voice

With regard to the student voice all the participants contacted their students to discuss their AAs and how they would be used (Chapter 3, section 10). This outcome is different from the data collected from the SEND survey where only 4% collected student feedback. It may be that the wording of the questions has created this different response, as the SEND survey asked respondents to comment on the type of evidence they collected to support an AA and the interview question was direct, and asked if they consulted the student about their AA. The interviewees said that consulting students took time to explain the various AAs available to them. Three interviewees raised issues with the students being able to practise their AAs in class tests and mock exams (Chapter 3, section 11.2).

5.3 Strand 3 – Small-Scale Survey of Stakeholder's Views

This strand investigated the views of all stakeholders involved in the AA process, SENCOs, students with reading issues, and parents/guardians. The study was conducted via questionnaires

given to each participant group. The findings revealed that SENCOs were awarding their students, with reading difficulties, tailor-made AA, a combination of which best removed barriers, for example, 25% extra time plus the use of a human reader. The current system has this flexibility. Foulkes (2003), when discussing the use of AA, stated, "they must be flexible enough to allow all students an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement." (cited in Peacey & Peacey, 2007, p.3). The students in the study agreed that their reading issues had impacted their studies. They believed they could not complete their examinations without their AA and that their arrangements were beneficial to them. The parent/guardians believed that their child's reading difficulties had impacted on their schooling, as they had to work harder and longer to achieve their results. They stated that their children had all suffered with self-esteem issues as a result of their reading difficulties. They believed that the AA awarded to their children was beneficial.

5.4 Further Concerns with AA

Further concerns with AA have been revealed by Lovett (2011) suggesting that concentrating on AA has meant that students never get the chance to remediate their skills, as they know their AAs will be there to help compensate for their difficulties. He states, "accommodations (AA in America) may at times have just the opposite effects, discouraging the development of need skills" (2011, p.15). This may be true, as there would be no impetus for a student to increase their reading skills if they know their exam and written work will be read to them. However, conversely, having to study nine subjects for GCSEs and then three intensively at A-Level takes a great deal of dedication in terms of learning the syllabi. Having then to try and remediate a skill, such as reading, may be a step too far for some, in terms of processing skills. Computers have read out loud functions and students are using other internet services, such as You Tube to help consolidate course material and revise for exams. The

question that probably should be asked is why are students entering secondary school with poor reading skills? Why have they left primary school without knowing how to decode properly, or read at speed to keep up with the demands of the secondary school curriculum? Are we, as educators, focusing our efforts in the wrong direction? Should there be a shift away from extra time to concentrate on finding the best assistive technologies to help those students with SpLDs when taking public examinations? Exams could be completed without a time limit where the outcome of the exam criteria is not reliant on the speed of a response.

5.5   Interpretation of findings in terms of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (2005)

Interpreting the findings in light of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (2005), it would seem that there are a number of factors that affect students who require AA in order to remove barriers when taking examinations. Figure 20 gives a schematic diagram where the different concerns raised are interpreted within the systems proposed in Bronfenbrenner's model, where the child is at the centre. These systems are, going from those with the most remote contact with the child inwards. The Macrosystem represents the Government policies, the Exosystem represents the Local Authorities, the Mesosytem constitutes the SEND Professional Organisations, the Microsystem is the child's Support Network, including school and family and the centre is the child. The concerns of the system are represented in the schematic in terms of the size of the arrow. The larger the arrow the greater the effect on the AA system and impact on the students. The largest arrow, arrow 1, emanates from Government policies where funding for training of SEND professionals and for schools to cater for SEND students may be affecting provision, the data from the research strands have highlighted that a centre's resources impact on AA provision in terms of physical resources, such as up-to-date standardised assessment tests, extra rooms and IT equipment and

qualified SEND professionals to diagnose and implement AA. Arrow 2 is the SENCO workload; this arrow emerges from the local authorities (LAs). LAs resource EHCPs for students with SEND and this impacts on the workload many SEND professionals have to complete, in addition to the burdensome paperwork needed for AA administration. Arrow 3 represents the lack of evidence base for specific AAs. The literature has revealed that there is a lack of studies evidencing how AAs support pupils with different SpLDs, instead, all processing disorders appear to be accommodated by the blanket accommodation of 25% extra time, as this is the most popular AA according to Ofqual (2019). This arrow emanates from the Professional Organisations since they are responsible for the guidance on AAs. Arrow 4 is the training of SEND professionals. This, too, emanates from the Professional Organisations as concerns have been raised with regard to the quality assurance of assessors and the qualifications on offer to assess for AA. Arrow 5 represents inspections for AA and this originates from the Professional Organisations. The JCQ represent eight of the awarding bodies and they inspect individual centres to make sure their guidance on AA is upheld. However, issues with the inspection process have been highlighted in terms of consistency of approach and regularity. Finally, Arrow 6, the students' voice, is the smallest arrow. This arrow emanates from the Professional Organisations, as the SEND survey found that only 4% of SEND professionals collect evidence from students with regards to their AA. Their lack of voice in this system is a concern.

Figure 20

Schematic representing how concerns raised with the AA system may be interpreted within Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (2005) to impact on the student.
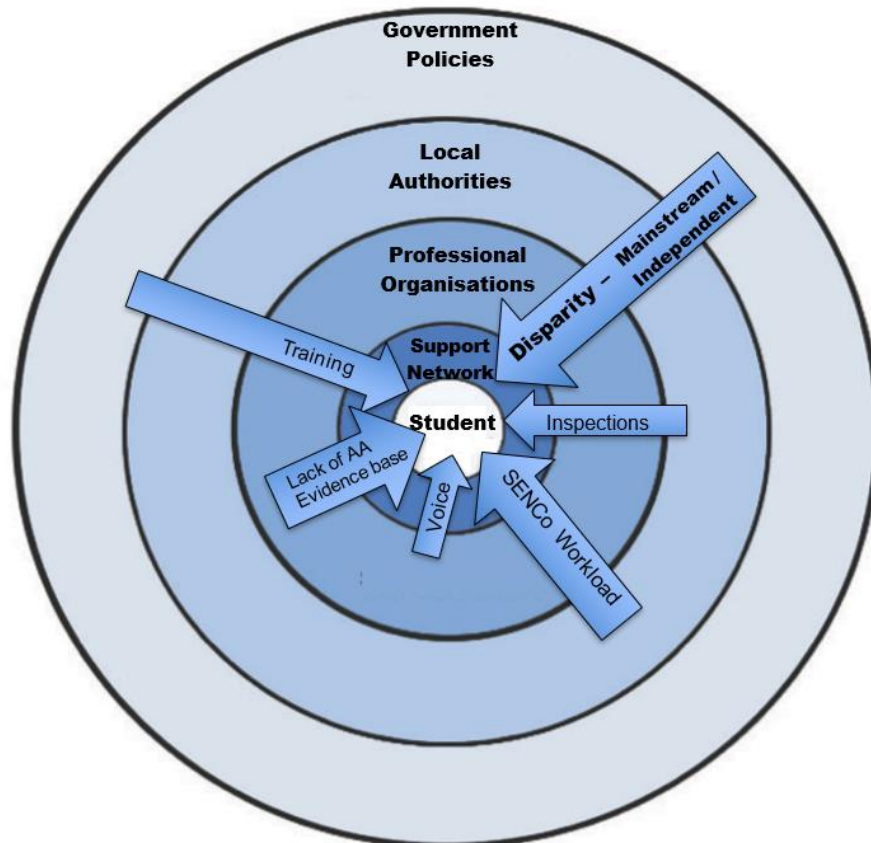
Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model explains how the data informs the debate on how current AAs replicate and reinforce disadvantage across the UK. Bronfenbrenner's theory, is "based on a person-context relational view of the process of human development." To be effective, interaction between the person-context must be "fairly regular… over extended periods of time." (Lerner, 2005, p.18). Figure 20 represents the context affecting the person/student at the centre of the model. The model suggests that the various systems are impacting the development of the student on different levels, but on the whole it is the outer ring of the Macrosystem/Government

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Policies that appear to have the greatest bearing on the delivery of AA to the student. This system is where the policies, laws and different government agencies, such as the DofE and Ofqual govern the regulations for SEND pupils. This system's authority over SEND pupils cannot be underestimated, as it establishes the rules, regulations and funding streams that govern the other systems. These impact on how the other systems which encompass the LAs and schools/colleges are able to support and fund SEND students.

In addition to this, the way the guidance supporting SEND and AA is interpreted by the various systems through the Professional Organisations also has a bearing on the implementation and delivery of AA. The research suggests that there are discrepancies in the systems with how guidance can be interpreted and funding for individual centres may put students at risk of not receiving a universal experience of this system.

The research has demonstrated variance in the systems which affects delivery of it. Discrepancies have been reported in the training of SEND professionals, in the proportion of trained SEND assessors in centres, in the way centres are inspected by the JCQ, in the tests used to assess for AA, in the resources to deliver AA (both human and physical), and in the opportunities for students to voice their opinion of their needs when taking public examinations. The model reflects the complexity of the system in terms of delivering AA to students. If the different components are not well supported by the overarching system – the Government, then discrepancies will occur and these will filter down through to the student at the centre of the model, suggesting that students will not receive a universal experience.

The model supported by this research reveals how current AAs replicate and reinforce disadvantage across the UK.

In the next section, suggestions provided by the interviewees and researcher are discussed in relation to overcoming the concerns identified.

5.5.1 Suggestions for overcoming the current concerns with AA working through the systems in Bronfenbrenner's Model

5.5.1.1 The Microsystem – Support Networks

The Microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's model (2005) encompasses the school and family of the student; it is the student's support network. Working with this network should ensure all stakeholders involved with the AA process understand its demands.

5.5.1.1.1 Senior Leadership Involvement in Centres

One of the suggestions to improve AA is for senior staff in centres, such as those on senior leadership teams (SLT), to understand the demands of this system. Comments from the interviewees included the need for more awareness of how much a job being a SENCO is and the fact that people in senior management do not understand the job.

It is imperative for SLT to understand the demands of this system; this appears to be a pressing issue for many SEND teams, especially those who were interviewed from the FE sector, some of whom have been reduced to zero-hour contracts. This is particularly important because if the SENCO is not available on the day of an inspection it must be a member of SLT who takes responsibility for showing a centre's documentation. A suggestion may be for the JCQ or Ofqual to produce a short video or information leaflet about the demands of being a SENCO and their statutory obligations for arranging AA in centres.

5.5.1.1.2 Students need training in how to use their AA

Another common point that arose was that students need to be trained in how to use AA. Many SEND professionals do not have the time to do this.

Again, if this is an issue encountered by centres, the JCQ could make a short information video on how to use extra time if SEND professionals themselves do not have the time to show students directly. Communicate-ed sells a resource of photocopiable handouts which can assist centres on advising students how best to use their AAs.

5.5.1.2 The Mesosystem – The Professional Organisations

The Mesosystem encompasses the Professional Organisations. The research strands have evidenced concerns with some of the AA processes of the professional organisations. Suggestions for improvements are outlined below.

5.5.1.2.1 An Umbrella Organisation for the Awarding Bodies

Many of those interviewed believe that there should be one application for AA and not separate applications for different awarding bodies. Additionally, there needs to be consistency in criteria when issuing AA. For example, one interviewee mentioned the discrepancy between what you can and cannot have at Entry Level Certificate (ELC) and what you can use in Functional Skills exams. According to this interviewee technology is not allowed at ELC but it is for Functional Skills. This makes it difficult to explain to students that they can use reading software in one of their exams but not the other. It is also difficult to explain this to parents/guardians. Many who were interviewed explained that their workload has doubled as a result of the removal of Functional Skills from AA online. Now these SENCOS have to make two applications if a

student is sitting a Functional Skills exam and GCSEs. This change happened as of 1st September 2018 (JCQ, 2018).

Establishing a comprehensive body for SENCOs to apply to all awarding bodies must be a priority in helping reduce administration for AA. Ofqual or the JCQ must stipulate the criteria for all exam boards to use in the country to eliminate discrepancies. If a student is used to working with assistive technology, such as reading software, they should be able to use this arrangement as their normal way of working in their exams. Regulations on this, need to be clarified for everyone.

If the JCQ become the umbrella organisation for all the examination boards this would then stop inspectors coming to centres from different examination boards. Centres could then expect one inspection covering all examination boards. Both time and money would be saved.

5.5.1.2.2 AA Inspections

A suggestion regarding the inspectors was also made. It was felt that JCQ inspectors do not have enough specialist knowledge to understand the documentation being presented to them. One interviewee suggested that inspectors should have at least a Level 7 qualification in SpLD to assess centres SEND documentation. It would also be beneficial to know the current qualifications needed to become a JCQ examination inspector. It is required for centres to demonstrate their professional qualifications in SEND, to aid transparency. Inspectors should also provide evidence of their qualifications and this could be presented online in a similar format to those who hold an APC on the SASC website.

5.5.1.2.3 AA Paperwork

There are issues with completing Form 8. Currently, the guidance is only to put the below average scores on the form (Castiglione, 2018). However, if the student moves to another centre Form 8 does not provide a full profile of this student. Completing Form 8 with all the test scores would enable other centres to have a more complete picture of need for a student and may also avoid tests being duplicated for A-level or FE courses, therefore possibly saving time for all. As these forms do not come with supporting evidence it is important to state all the assessment tests on Form 8. Form 8 should also be used for university arrangements if the candidate is only seeking extra time and the use of a laptop. If the candidate can demonstrate this as their *normal way of working,* then they should not need to apply for the DSA to have their needs recognised at university. In the case of SpLDs, these are lifelong learning issues, something the DfE has recognised in the recent change in rules regarding assessment reports (DfE, February, 2019).

Another suggestion for improvement is for the paperwork to be streamlined. Currently, to process an AA application you need the following documents: Form 8 (10 pages long); Data protection form (this has recently been redeveloped from 1 page to 4 pages in response to GDPR, January 2019); evidence of normal way of working; teacher evidence to support the application and the AA online application. One document that encompasses these elements should be created and held electronically for inspectors to view and for other centres to have if a student moves. Having a central register would enable all SENCOs to have access to files, especially those in the FE sector who struggle to get Form 8s from senior schools. The JCQ announced their move towards e-files in September 2019 but neglected to provide guidance to centres on how to use them and the required content. Alternatively, the onus could be put on the student who is eligible for AA. They could complete a document that outlines

their reasons for needing it. This could then be compiled with their assessment scores and teachers could confirm the student's normal way of working in class, rather than centres gathering exam scripts and other evidence to be kept on file. Giving the student *voice* to AA may in the end reduce the paperwork.

5.5.1.2.4 Uniformity across Centres

Currently, all the organisations that deal with AA, from the JCQ, to the professional organisations, to schools and higher education institutions, such as universities, clearly wish to provide a fair and easy to manage service, but the interaction between them seems to be asynchronistic and this is causing conflict when it comes to delivering AA. An overhaul is needed to provide a clear, evidence-based and streamlined approach to delivering AA, if we are going to continue to use this model. As previously explained one way to achieve this would be for Form 8 (if this is going to continue) to be used as evidence of need in senior school, FE and HE institutions.

5.5.1.3 The Macrosystem – Government Policies to do with SEND

The research data, as well as the Dunford (2019) report has revealed the views of a sample of SEND professionals. The data from these professionals appears to indicate that there may be discrepancies between the maintained and independent sectors in terms of the amount of qualified SEND professionals in each centre and the resources available. The Government need to provide funds to help with these discrepancies in order to support teacher training and the development and implementation of UK based assessment tests.

5.5.1.3.1 Identifying SEND Students – Teacher Training

It would seem that more training needs to be included at PGCE and primary level teacher training. Woods et al. (2010) when researching

access to educational assessment for special needs students found that teachers said there was a "lack of staff awareness and understanding of student entitlement" when understanding the needs for students with AA (Woods et al., 2010, p.31). Bell (2013) also commented that students entering special needs courses, despite having teacher qualifications, had little knowledge about SpLDs and their underlying difficulties. More training is needed on teacher training courses. This is especially so as since 2011 the Government has made it clear that all classroom teachers should be teachers of SEN (DfE, 2011a) adding more pressure on classroom teachers to support a wide range of students. This is another reason why the Government should help with funding. The data from the participants of the SEND survey suggests that amongst the 21-30 year olds working in the field 29% were unqualified.

5.5.1.3.2 Qualifications to Assess for AA

One interviewee commented that the last time the Government provided funding for the training of SEND professionals was as the result of the Rose Report (2009). Funding for specific SEND training and for CPD is needed to improve parity across the centres.

One interviewee suggested that the SENCO should have an APC (Assessment Practising Certificate) to lead their team and school in AA. This may be hard to achieve as currently there are only 1410 assessors in the country that hold the APC as of February 2019 according to the SASC website. However, with SASC/PATOSS recent changes as of 8th April 2019, to grow its membership this figure may increase and therefore may be feasible.

An interviewee suggested that, to make the system fairer around the country, Teaching Assistants (TAs) should be trained in how to assess. This interviewee believes that TAs are in the best position to see a student's normal way of working in class, so they could provide

evidence to support a student's application. If the current system of AA is reliant on the arbitrary cut-off scores of 84 and 69 standard scores in processing tests, this interviewee believes this could be an avenue to explore. However, in light of the current issues with qualifications and training this may further dilute the rigour of the training process to assess for AA.

5.5.1.3.3 Assessments used for AA

It is this researcher's firm belief that a radical alteration should occur to the assessments used for AA, this view was supported by another interviewee who had a similar idea. The suggestion is for the Government/DfE to provide assessment tests that are normed on a UK population. They currently provide SATs testing at the end of all the Key Stages to demonstrate current attainment, so extending this to providing assessment packs for AA to centres would seem logical. This specialist testing could include a battery of tests that TAs, teachers, or SEND professionals could use to determine whether a student requires AA. These tests could have parallel forms and the tests could include: a free writing test; single word reading, nonsense word reading, comprehension, speed and fluency tests; working memory and short-term auditory memory and a visual processing test. This would also have the added benefit of helping to build up a history of need for a student throughout the Key Stages. It would then provide centres and assessors with a free battery of tests that were reliable and valid because they were normed on a large UK sample.

Currently, each centre has to provide tests to assess for AA or buy in services from the local authority or independent assessors to test students. Tests used for AA are expensive and many maintained secondary schools do not have the financial resources to buy them and their copyrighted record forms. Psychological testing is big business (Lerner, 2004) and assessments for AA are very expensive.

If this system is to be fairer the Government should bear the cost of making UK normed tests, enabling access to those who need them. Clearly, there would be issues with retesting and with keeping the tests secure so candidates cannot falsify them. The tests would also need to be renormed at least every 10 years to ensure they represented the current population. A large data base could be constructed to house all the results of these tests, similar to that currently held by CEM (Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring) with MIDYS and ALIS testing.

The suggestions aim to improve the system of AA. To make it more transparent and accountable for those who have to implement it and fairer for those who receive it.

5.6 Reflections on Research

The main area that prevents the current AA system from being equitable in terms of its delivery seems to be the disparity between centres in terms of financial, human and physical resources.

5.6.1 Disparity between Centres

The data from the SEND professionals in the current study has revealed possible disparity between the maintained and independent sectors in terms of delivering AA. This has implications with regard to the Equality Act 2010 and further implications in terms of a student's future prospects.

5.6.2 Rethinking the Examination Process

The whole examination system needs to be rethought in terms of AA, as it seems there is not enough specialist provision to deliver this system for all who require it. Maybe efforts should be concentrated on providing assistive technology, such as laptops, readers, voice activation software to support students with SpLDs rather than

fulfilling criteria to be awarded extra time. If a centre cannot afford these accommodations students may be able to utilise the current testing centres around the country that deal with other examinations, such as driving test centres, or pop-up exam centres could be utilised to fulfil this need. The government could fund these additional resources. In addition, exams that do not test speediness could possibly be completed in the student's own time rather than within a designated time limit.

5.7 Limitations of the Research

It may be that the results could be biased, as the majority of participants in the survey were attendees of AA update conferences of a single organisation. The organisation is a large UK provider of training in Access Arrangements. The researcher did contact other organisations responsible for AA training, but they were not able to assist with this research. The study participants came from all twelve regions of the UK and were predominantly from the maintained sector, so the strength of this research is that it provides a countrywide insight into the current issues SEND professionals face and gives a *voice* based on the maintained sector who educate the majority of students in the UK.

The twenty-three interviews conducted with SEND professionals provided extensive information on their views of the current system. However, these interviews were not fully transcribed, it may be at a later date, they could be fully transcribed and coded which may provide more nuanced findings. This would be particularly interesting in the case of those colleagues who work in the FE sector, as they seem to be facing the greatest challenge of all the SEND professionals coping with the current AA system and its practices.

Strand three of the research, the survey with students with reading difficulties, as a result of their dyslexia, and other stakeholders, could

have been extended with follow-up interviews with all stakeholders if more time had been available. In particular, speaking with the students about their experiences may have provided more in-depth analysis on their views of AA and how they used them when sitting public examinations.

5.8 Contribution to the field

This study has highlighted many concerns with the current AA system and its processes. It has confirmed and supported the researcher's initial feelings, working as a senior school SENCO, that this system is not universal for all who have access to it. The evidence from the SEND professionals, from the twelve regions of the UK, suggests that the system needs altering to make it a more equitable experience for those students who have a SpLD and meet the eligibility criteria to be awarded AA. There are holes in the system, which mean that students will not receive an optimal experience when encountering and working through its processes. This, therefore, is affecting the overall development of students who would benefit from this system, and as a result, these students' life choices may be affected. However, despite this, all those interviewed agreed that AA benefited students with SpLDs in public examinations.

It is hoped that the recommendations in this research will be supported by the awarding bodies, the JCQ and the DfE. Changes are needed to streamline this system, to make it one that is not dependent on a centre's finances, resources and levels of SEND expertise, so that every student who needs AA can be identified with UK standardised tests that are reliable and valid. The system needs to be supported with evidence-based research, to enable students taking high stake examinations, such as BTEC, Functional Skills, GCSE and A-Level, to demonstrate their true potential.

5.9 Implications of this research

The current research is timely, as the findings confirm and support what *The Report of the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, September, 2019) has found. This report surveyed a variety of stakeholders involved with AA and the data was derived from four different surveys. It had 114 responses to a survey on malpractice from a range of stakeholders including examination officers, teachers, principals, senior leaders and those working in the awarding bodies. This survey was open from 1st February to 18th March, 2019. 1,421 examination officers were also surveyed, 1,844 students were surveyed via the Student Room website (16-19 year olds) and 145 SENCOs and specialist AA assessors who worked in secondary school and post-16 education were also surveyed.

The current research gives additional quantitative and qualitative evidence to the issues raised in the Commission's report. *The Report of the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice* (Dunford, 2019) investigated the whole of the AA process, whereas the current research has investigated the experiences of SEND professionals, students and their parents/carers.

The current research therefore has been able to highlight other areas that have not been identified in the recent government report (Dunford, 2019) on AA. These include:

1. How FE colleges are affected by AA when it comes to arranging their students' AA. They face challenges with receiving Form 8s from previous centres, having enough qualified SEND staff to processes AA and teaching staff to identify students if they are struggling in their subject.

2. There is a need for evidence-based studies to be conducted to validate the AA process. Currently, the most commonly awarded AA is 25% extra time (Ofqual, 2019), this arrangement is used to support a range of SpLDs. However, we know that every student has different needs and to optimally benefit from this system, AA needs to be bespoke, but this takes expertise and time.

3. There are problems with using predominantly American standardised testing for AA, and a lack of large sample sizes on UK based standardised test. There are also issues with the different training routes available to become an AA assessor in terms of the prerequisite knowledge needed, hours of study and rigour of the content of courses on offer.

4. It was recommended that students are consulted about their AA in the process of tailoring their arrangements and, in addition, training students who are awarded AA how to use them in examinations.

5. It was recommended that the process be altered so that one institution oversees all examination boards, so that all boards follow the same criteria for AA, via one application and inspection process to reduce the bureaucracy in the system. The ultimate condition would be for there to be one exam board in the country that every student takes to allow for quality assurance and parity. There could be a higher and lower tier of examinations.

6. If Form 8 is to be kept as the pupil passport it should be valid in all centres from secondary centres to colleges to universities and the DSA.

Together the data highlights areas needing reform to make AA a system that is evidence-based, manageable in its delivery and equitable for those who need and use it. This system needs reforming to address the disparity that is occurring at present. The reforms are needed at every level, as seen through Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (2005), from the government to individual centres in order to address the current inconsistencies. This variability leads to inequity. The student at the centre of this model is not guaranteed a common experience if needing AA.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – SEND Professionals' Survey

SEND Professionals' Survey

Q1 Gender

_____

- -

Q2 Age - please tick a box

○ 21-30 years (1)

○ 31-40 years (2)

○ 41-50 years (3)

○ 51 - 60 years (4)

○ 61 years - and above (5)

- -

Q3 Geographic location or postal code of your workplace

_____

- -

Q4 What proportion of your school is on the SEND register?

○ up to 5% (1)

○ 5-10% (2)

○ 10-15% (3)

○ Greater than 15% (4)

Q5 How many pupils on the SEND register receive support?

_____

Q6 How many pupils receive Access Arrangements in your school for GCSE and A-Level exams using AA-online?

_____

Q7 How many pupils receive centre delegated Access Arrangements in your school for GCSE and A-Level exams?

_____

Q8 What type of Specific Learning Difficulties do you deal with in your school? You can choose more than one.

☐ Dyslexia (1)

☐ Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) (2)

☐ Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (3)

☐ Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) (4)

☐ Hearing impairment (5)

☐ Visual impairment (6)

☐ Physical Difficulties (7)

☐ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (8)

☐ Other (9)

Q9 Are you a SENCO, Specialist Teacher, or Independent Access Arrangements Assessor? How long have you been in your position? Please tick the boxes that best describe your position.

☐ SENCO - How many years? (4)

_____

☐ Specialist Teacher - How many years? (5)

_____

☐ Both a SENCO & Specialist Teacher. How many years? (3)

_____

☐ Independent Access Arrangements Assessor. How many years? (7)

_____

Q10 If you are a SENCO please state if you hold other positions of responsibility in your school.

☐ SENCO & Class Teacher (1)

☐ SENCO & Senior Leadership Team (2)

☐ SENCO, Class Teacher and Senior Leadership Team (4)

☐ SENCO and other position/s (3)

_____

Q11 What type of school do you work in?

○ Secondary School (1)

○ Special School (2)

○ Independent Senior School (3)

○ Independent Senior Special School (4)

○ FE college - including technical colleges (5)

Q12 What qualifications do you hold to carry out your role? What year did you qualify? Please indicate if you hold more than one.

☐ Level 5 Certificate in SpLD. What year did you qualify? (47)

_____

☐ Level 7 Certificate in SpLD. What year did you qualify? (48)

_____

☐ Masters in SpLD. What year did you qualify? (49)

_____

☐ Doctorate in SpLD. What year did you qualify? (50)

_____

☐ A specific SENCO qualification. What year did you qualify? (51) _____

☐ Another qualification accepted by the JCQ. What year did you qualify? (52)

_____

☐ No qualification (53)

Q13 Do you hold the APC? If yes, please state who you hold it with.

○ BDA (1)

○ PATOSS (2)

○ Dyslexia Action (3)

Q14 If you held the APC in the past, and it has lapsed, please state when it lapsed and why you never renewed it.

☐ Date the APC lapsed (1)

_____

☐ Why wasn't it renewed? (2)

_____

Q15 How many members do you have in your special needs department, please include yourself in the team?

☐ Number of full-time SEN teachers (1)

_____

☐ Number of part-time SEN teachers (2)

_____

☐ Number of teaching assistants (4)

_____

☐ Administrative personnel (3)

_____

Q16 How many in your department are qualified to assess for Access Arrangements?

_____

Q17 Do you use an outside specialist to support Access Arrangements? You may choose more than one.

☐ Yes, a specialist teacher with an APC (1)

☐ Yes, a specialist teacher with the appropriate qualifications (2)

☐ Yes, an educational psychologist (3)

Q18 On average, how many hours do you spend completing paperwork, e.g. Form 8, gathering evidence for Access Arrangements, AA online or contacting the awarding bodies, per pupil?

○ 0-1 hour (1)

○ 1-3 hours (2)

○ 3-5 hours (3)

○ 5-10 hours (4)

○ in excess of 10 hours (5)

○ Other (6)

Q19 How many pieces of evidence do you collect to support an Access Arrangement?

○ 1-2 pieces of evidence (1)

○ 2-4 pieces of evidence (2)

Page Break

Q20 Please can you explain the type of evidence you collect to support an Access Arrangement.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q21 How often do you update your knowledge on the JCQ guidelines for Access Arrangements?

○ annually (1)

○ 1-2 years (2)

○ 2-4 years (3)

○ never (4)

Q22 How do you update your knowledge of the current JCQ guidelines? You may choose more than one.

☐ Via a webinar (10)

☐ Attend a course on the updates (11)

☐ Read the JCQ guidelines (12)

☐ Look on the JCQ website (13)

☐ Other (14)

Q23 Please put in order your most frequently applied for Access
Arrangements.

	Most Common (25)	2nd most common (26)	3rd most common (27)	Rarely use (28)	Never use (29)
25% extra time (9)	○	○	○	○	○
50% extra time (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Scribe (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Reader (12)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (13)	○	○	○	○	○

Q24 If you have ever applied for 50% extra time please state why.

_____

_____

Q25 Do you believe the extra time awards of 25% and 50% are supported by evidence based research?

○ Yes (5)

○ No (6)

○ Unsure (7)

Q26 If you are a SENCO, how often is your documentation for Access Arrangements inspected by the JCQ as part of a whole school assessment?

○ Annually (1)

○ 1-2 years (2)

○ 2-3 years (3)

○ Never been inspected (4)

Q27 If you are a SENCO, how often is your documentation for Access Arrangements inspected by the JCQ as a specific SEN inspection?

○ Annually (1)

○ 1-2 years (2)

○ 2-3 years (3)

○ Never been inspected separately from the whole school inspection (4)

Q28 Please state the name of the tests you most frequently use to assess for Access Arrangements.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q29 How familiar are you with the validity and reliability of the tests you use for Access Arrangements?

○ Extremely familiar (1)

○ Very familiar (2)

○ Moderately familiar (3)

○ Slightly familiar (4)

○ Not familiar at all (5)

Q30 Do you agree with pupils having extra time in public examinations?

○ Definitely yes (1)

○ Probably yes (2)

○ Might or might not (3)

○ Probably not (4)

○ Definitely not (5)

Q31 What organisations do you consult if you require further knowledge about the tests you use? You may choose more than one.

☐ NASEN (1)

☐ BDA (2)

☐ PATOSS (3)

☐ DA (4)

☐ Communicate-ed (9)

☐ SASC (5)

☐ The institution you trained at (6)

☐ Ask a colleague (7)

☐ Contact a SENCO forum (8)

☐ Other (10)

Q32 Would you be willing to take part in a short interview about Access Arrangements? If yes, please could your leave you contact details in the box below.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q33 Contact Details

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 2 – SEND Professional Interview Questions

- **Before we commence you must know that all the data will be anonymised and you can withdraw consent for your views to be included up until publication.**
- **I would like to tape our conversation for ease of transcription. Yes/No**
- **I will provide you with a transcript of our interview if you wish.**

1. How are students referred to you? How do you deal with these referrals? *E.g. do you screen with Lucid and then do a battery of tests or refer on to another professional.*

2. Do you complete Form 8 with all the tests you use or just record the scores that are below average on the form?

3. Do you ever consult the pupil or parents about their arrangements? Have you created any special forms to collate evidence for the JCQ inspector? If so, can you explain these or provide a copy.

4. How old were you when you first entered the profession and what inspired you to do so? Are you concerned about this aging population of experienced SpLD practitioners? Do you have any suggestions for enticing younger members of the teaching profession into the area of SpLD?

5. What qualifications do you hold? Would you consider furthering your qualifications? Are there any barriers for you to do so? (If they hold the APC I can then delve further into the renewal criteria for this award)

6. If you hold a JCQ qualification to assess, such as the CCET or AAA, do you feel the training of 100 was sufficient for assessing for AA?

7. Do resources limit your ability to assess and provide for AA? Please can you explain further.

8. How do you find your JCQ inspections when they occur? How often do they occur? What documents do you present to the inspector?

9. Do you think class teachers have too much say in awarding extra time given that their evidence must support an application over and above specialist reports?

10. Do you consider the present system of AA manageable? (Woods question from 2007 & 2017)

11. Do you think the system can be changed to be more effective or are you happy with the current process?

12. Is there anything else you wish to say about AA?

Appendix 3 – Interview Coding – two samples
Codes

time

experience

inconsistencies

Interview Questions – Sample 1	response	codes
1. How are students referred to you? How do you deal with these referrals? E.g. do you screen with Lucid and then do a battery of tests or refer on to another professional.	usually take emails from teachers, primary school referrals. Baseline testing CAT testing and then lucid exact for the whole cohort, from that data then select the boys she wants to do further testing eg. Diagnostic reading then from that info she knows where to put them - reading recovery, social skills, emotional literacy group etc. school has specialists that deal with social skills have 2 ELSAs and training a further 6. 2 fully qualified counsellors and one more is training. she line manages the counsellors as well.	Email referrals – teachers, previous schools Baseline tests Specialist groups Qualified staff to take these groups
2. Do you complete Form 8 with all the tests you use or just record the scores that are below average on the form?	she intends to complete form 8 as soon as boys have been identified in year 7 so she can add to them over time	Form 8 completed as soon as they arrive
3. Do you ever consult the pupil or parents about their arrangements? Have you created any special forms to collate evidence for the JCQ inspector? If so, can you explain these or provide a copy.	yes, esp. the boys with an ehcp she explains the arrangements put in place. Parents are informed of baseline testing and they have already given prior consent for any assessment that goes on in school but if there is more specific testing she will phone parents to get the go ahead.	Yes consult pupils & parents re AA
4. How old were you when you first entered the profession and what inspired you to do so? Are you concerned about this aging population of experienced SpLD practitioners? Do you	inspired by child. All my best support staff are in their 50s & 60s one retiring at Easter diff to replace her as she does all the social skills she has a lot of experience and training also losing her senior LSA next year. She has just	Highly trained support staff Difficult to replace their expertise Encourages younger teachers to specialise Provides in house CPD

have any suggestions for enticing younger members of the teaching profession into the area of SpLD?	introduced an alternative provision working on the weaker academic students and expand this to boys with behaviour issues she wants younger teachers to get involved with this provision. she also does a lot of cpd training in school. an …… and then took 10 years out to raise children and then retrained as a teacher.	
5. What qualifications do you hold? Would you consider furthering your qualifications? Are there any barriers for you to do so?	honors degree history and classics, PGCE in infective inclusion - …….. this gave her the level 7 for AA, MA course in Autism and all sorts of qualifications she did that 2 years ago. She is always looking at different courses to do. Some of the courses have been funded by the schools she worked at.	Highly qualified SEND professional Always looking to upskill herself Supportive school that helps fund training
6. If you hold a JCQ qualification to assess, such as the CCET or AAA, do you feel the training of 100 was sufficient for assessing for AA?	the more experience you have the better. No 100 hours is not enough to do the job. It took me a year to get mine.	Experience 100 JCQ not enough compared to1 yr Level 7
7. Do resources limit your ability to assess and provide for AA? Please can you explain further	no not really, I am well resourced. She has on the roll 57 ehcps and another 14 joining in Sept and only losing about 5. she still teaches - 2 classes of year 11 small groups of 4 and one hour of year 10 but the rest is admin	Well resourced Demanding job – SENCO and teaches with huge amount of EHCPs
8. How do you find your JCQ inspections when they occur? How often do they occur? What documents do you present to the inspector?	they weren't being done efficiently so they were having 2 inspections a year. One sen and one whole school inspection as the person before were not being done correctly. The first time she had an inspection it was a guy and he was very nice. The woman now is very officious and upset senior management.	Previous SENCO did not have correct paperwork JCQ monitored the centre – 2 inspections Officious inspector

9. Do you think evidence from class teachers is the best evidence to collect for supporting and awarding extra time as opposed to reports from SpLD teachers and EP reports?	No I don't an EP recommendation and the assessment work I have done with them is better. I do collect emails from teachers and I give the boys the aa in the exams and they change the colour of pen in exams which she copies and keeps in their folders.	No -relies on her knowledge of the boys and EP – suggests teachers are not fully aware of needs Emails from teachers Change colour of pen in exams.
10. Do you consider the present system of AA manageable?	depends on what time of the year you ask me. When I'm trying to get all the annual reviews done and all the paperwork that is a priority. Esp. when you get a new line manager every 2 years. 19mins who asks why the LSAs aren't doing the annual reviews and why she is going off sight to see new pupils in situ. The line manager doesn't want her to do this. Senior management want all her dept. teaching every single period but then who would do the paperwork.	Conflict between SEND team and SLT Huge workload of SENCO SLT want SEND team to teach a full tt but then no time to do admin for SEND pupils
11. Do you think the system can be changed to be more effective or are you happy with the current process?	not so much for exam regs. but for the new code of practice early identification being essential so much going on in primary and she is still having to apply for ehcps in secondary when it should be the primary school doing this. ehcps being given but no resources behind them.	Senior SENCOs deal with basic literacy issues – more money needed in primary Councils giving out EHCPs but no funding attached
12. Is there anything else you wish to say about AA?	no over keen on new system where you have to apply for BTEC and A levels not happy with this. doubling the paper work	Annual change last year now have to have 2 separate applications Paperwork – manageability
Interview Questions – Sample 2	response	codes
1. How are students referred to you? How do you deal with these referrals? E.g. do you screen with Lucid and then do a battery of	referred very early on in the yr jan/feb for sept get many applications from the Sheffield schools get notification of pupils difficulties and their AA for	FE college referrals begin half a yr before entry in sept. College has a process for new intake – interview and needs

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tests or refer on to another professional.	a reader or extra time. For enrolment they complete an additional needs referral form which indicates their difficulty and examination support. they then come in and have a meeting which is an initial assessment they have an hours interview an interview questionnaire that they devised designed to pull out information for a support plan look at previous arrangements and to see if they can continue at college. they are 16 yrs when they come - foundation courses to entry one, BTEC, Apprenticeships, performing and creative arts, TV studios, large construction, catering, etc courses. change in functional skills doesn't really affect them. anything up to a level 3 they don't need to be assessed formally they can have a reader or extra time anything above a level 3 are being reassessed to see if they need arrangements. They don't accept form 8s from other schools as usually they are so badly written and not done well so they reassess unless they have a good relationship with them. Every year there are a few arrangements that need to be removed or tidied up. He doesn't know how they get away with it. Students can't say why they have had extra time or a reader. Makes life difficult. 7-8mins	form to make up support plan for pupil at college Exams they apply for – more than just A Levels – new changes mean more applications Don't accept Form 8 from other centres as so badly written and often give wrong AAs
2. Do you complete Form 8 with all the tests you use or just record the scores that are below average on the form?	We do the whole form 8 history of need and then we also fill out the testing. Tend to use 2-3 tests that are quick and accurate. Tests used DASH handwriting speed, SDMT quite quick for visual processing sometimes do RAN in CTOPP2, use	Completes the whole Form 8 with testing Use of quick processing tests Comments on renorming tests and American based battery of tests available to assessors

	<mark>Access Reading test for a reader is a group</mark> tests. EM asked about SASC SDMT but they go on the refresher course and they still support it. EM explained why it shouldn't be used. WRIT has never been renormed and its American bias gasoline to petrol, <mark>It's a shame they don't renorm them but I guess there is a cost implication</mark>. DASH was produced in the UK. <mark>A lot of the tests seem to all come from America which seems a shame as it would be nice to have some standardised in the UK as it would make them more valid as there</mark> are anomalies, terminology like kindergarten etc. 12mins.	
3. Do you ever consult the pupil or parents about their arrangements? Have you created any special forms to collate evidence for the JCQ inspector? If so, can you explain these or provide a copy.	consult the pupil but rarely consult parents but we now have to get permission from pupil to consult parents due to GDPR at 16 yrs old. There is a box that they tick to see if they wish their parents consulted. This is a recent change due to the legislation	FE college GDPR issues re consulting parents Consult pupils but need consent to consult their parents
4. How old were you when you first entered the profession and what inspired you to do so? Are you concerned about this aging population of experienced SpLD practitioners? Do you have any suggestions for enticing younger members of the teaching profession into the area of SpLD?	<mark>now 47 he was mid 30s</mark> when he entered the profession 2005 did level 7 OCR he was first cohort through the new changes. He was a ………… and then went into additional support. One person …….. dys specialist who enthused him and mentored him and he learnt a lot and they also did the level 7 at college so he was able to get it for free at the college he worked at. <mark>There is a significant lack of people getting their APC. sat on a table with DR ……., they are getting a little bit above their station</mark> (ref to a (professional organisation)	Mid 30s when did Level 7 Did it at his college was mentored Loved to do full assessments when he held his APC Disparaging comments about APC renewal process – time consuming, failing for mis scoring, not being allowed to resubmit – money making. Believes there is a North -South divide in terms of CPD available. (professional organisation) have not supported the FE sector

	as15 mins they are making it so diff to actually obtain it as so many people are getting referred on ridiculous things. It is a money making business really need to look at the diagnosis of that report is accurate not referring because you got one confidence interval wrong. Students want to know why they are dysl and how you build that picture up 16. He doesn't have a membership any more they are a completely useless organisation, they don't support you, they have done nothing to steady the ship in FE so they are an organisation that are failing. A shame as he loved full assessments, found them fascinating 17 but now something he doesn't do as something that needs tackling as there are a lack of assessors. Schools these days are now asking outside assessors to come and assess which is against the JCQ. Any way of enticing young people - the courses that they run - there aren't any around where they are - time restrictions. Professional organisation events age of people and majority of people are female not sure why it is that there aren't any men. Look at the course how it is written and how accessible it is. APC assessors and you should submit a report as long as the diagnosis is correct you should pass and if you have other corrections to attend to you should cover that in some sort of cpd rather than failing the 19 mins this is what you need to look at next time. to treat people like professionals, a money making racquet £170 to get the APC and if	Experienced professionals failing their APC

	you fail you have to pay again. Very clicky, events down in London talk to you in a disgraceful way and if you are from the north you must be a bit thicker up there 20 very clicky and very elitist. it is a shame a lot of colleagues who have applied and failed have 20 year's experience and have been referred. it is a money making business. They are making it more and more complicated.	
5. What qualifications do you hold? Would you consider furthering your qualifications? Are there any barriers for you to do so?	level 7 diploma for dys spld, ………..cert ed. Would like to do a masters but the cost involved are huge and that is the issue the cost and time involved are issues. Has a 1 yr old son so life is busy.	Would like to do further qualifications – time and money an issue as small child
6. If you hold a JCQ qualification to assess, such as the CCET or AAA, do you feel the training of 100 was sufficient for assessing for AA?	NA	
7. Do resources limit your ability to assess and provide for AA? Please can you explain further	22mins resources don't limit ability to assess. Problem is time restraints as there is certain kits used which are reasonably quick GORT 5 TOMAL 2 still in box getting the time to use them is an issue. Text read and write gold is used a lot by the students, did have inspiration but need another mind mapping software. We don't seem to find many courses to improve cpd in dyslexia. Day seminars etc are rare and Professional organisations do them but refuses to go to them.	Resources don't limit him but time issues for assessing pupils Not a lot of opportunity for CPD in his area
8. How do you find your JCQ inspections when they occur? How often do they occur? What documents do you	One a year depending which site they inspect. Sometimes they look at how an exam is being conducted or another time they might look at AA and	Once a year they are inspected Each inspection different in terms of what they look at

present to the inspector?	the folders they are mainly bothered about form 8 and that the support plan marries with the form 8 and the data protection notice is there. Form 8 needs to reflect what is in the support plan.	Concern over Form 8 and support plan that they marry up.
9. Do you think evidence from class teachers is the best evidence to collect for supporting and awarding extra time as opposed to reports from SpLD teachers and EP reports?	26 mins it is we don't tend to collect evidence form staff tutors unless it is new and they have forms to do that. If they come straight from school then we just use what they have had at school so they will reapply on the back of the school report. collating evidence is hard but it is useful as they see them in situ if they take long time to process information or if they need a reader etc. 50% et have a lot at different centres but he is very cautious about using this. Scores below 69 some assessors dole it out making sure all the arrangements are right for them not just going on the recommendations.	Use previous school evidence if they have it to support FE AA application Difficult to collate evidence but it is useful if they have evidence of working at the college Cautious about awarding 50% et believes some assessors are not Wants to make sure the pupils have the right arrangements
10. Do you consider the present system of AA manageable?	JCQ changing the rules all the time 29 electronic signatures – JCQ Head wouldn't even speak to him would just ignore him. The problem with the JCQ is that they think everyone is a school we have 3 campuses 12000 around pupils in ……. You need to hand sign it and then go in the post to central exams team so it could get lost. Still hand sign the back and scan it back in. You can protect a word document and it is fine. They change things all the time people have budgets and time constraints 400 here and 600 pupils on other campus to assess. He is on a .8 and colleague on .6 and 2 other colleagues on a 1.2 not many people to do all	Annual JCQ changes an issue esp. at FE college as he has 3 sites to cover on a shrinking staff count. Made the point that people have budgets and time constraints so annual changes impact a great deal.

	that assessment. 31. Our team has shrunk despite the number of pupils needing support has grown.	
11. Do you think the system can be changed to be more effective or are you happy with the current process?	Yes, it can and it should be JCQ are quite old fashioned they need to look at what and why they changing it just for changing sake. FORM 8 changes each year some of the evidence they ask for is just putting things in to populate the form. If they had that arrangement at school, then why do you have to redo this. Form 8 locked you have to go to Professional organisation for it. No spell check, the form breaks up on their system. It's rubbish. Professional organisation have the chair at the moment they are not professional enough to be there and JCQ needs a good overhaul. Head of JCQ needs to stop speaking like a computer he never comes to com-ed refresher course EM mentioned seen him at Professional organisation.	Annual changes – changes for the sake of change no real reason why If AA at school then why need to reassess at college Form 8 difficult to use JCQ needs a good overhaul
12. Is there anything else you wish to say about AA?	They need a good overhaul and the way they go about things - you cannot ring them anymore you have to email them. Dates for submission are not useful bc of the amount of people they have to assess 35 mins.	JCQ good overhaul You have to email them, can no longer ring them. Deadline dates for AA submissions not useful for them as they have so many to assess.

Mapping of Stage 1 themes to existing themes in the literature, Stage 2				
Workload of SENCOs & Admin of AA	*JCQ inspections*	*Training to become an AA assessor/ level of qualifications in centres*	*Evidence base and tests used for AA*	*Student voice*
Sample 1				
Email evidence from teachers, primary school referrals		EISAs, specialist teachers, counsellors	Baseline assessments	Yes boys with EHCPs
Form 8 completed start of yr 7 Contacts parents for assessments/consults boys with EHCPs		Helps to train younger teachers in her school . All best support staff are in 50s&60s – age issue	100 hrs for JCQ compared to level 7 not enough	
Demanding job – huge SEND list and teaching commitments		Highly qualified professional always wanting to upskill herself		
Previous SENCO did not have correct paperwork do caused the centre to be monitored	2 inspections and officious inspector due to improper paperwork	Experience is needed		
Emails from teachers		Relies on her knowledge of the boys she teaches - experience	Asks boys to change the colour of their pen when using extra time	
Conflict between SEND team and SLT				
More money needed in Primary school as councils are giving out EHCPs but no				

funding is attached				
Annual changes to JCQ criteria now have 2 separate applications – paperwork and manageability				
Sample 2				
FE college referral begin half a year before entry				
New process in the college for new students – interview and needs assessment to make up support plan				
Changes to exam applications re different boards as to workload				
Don't accept Form 8 from other centres as so badly written = reassessment – they complete the whole of Form 8 with testing		Has a level 7. loved to assess when he had his APC. Didn't pass it disparaging comments made about the APC renewal process – time consuming and failing for mis scoring, not allowed to resubmit – money making business. Believes there is a north south divide in	Use quick processing tests Comments made on using American normed tests and why these are problematic	GDPR in FE colleges means that students can withhold their data from parents/guardians

		terms of available CPD.		
Resources don't limit him, but time does when assessing	Inspected once a year. each inspection is different in terms of what they look for	Would like to do further qualifications but it is time that is preventing him		
Use previous school evidence to support FE AA application				
Difficulties in collating evidence from other centres				Wants to make sure pupils have the right AA
Annual changes made by JCQ an issue as they have 3 sites and shrinking staff count				
Annual changes impact a great deal for the sake of no real reason why				
If they have AA at school, then why does Form 8 have to be redone at FE				
Form 8 difficult to use – old technology. JCQ needs a good overhaul				

Appendix 4 – SENCO Survey

SENCO Reading Study

Q1 Name of school. This will be anonymised in the write up of the study.

_____

Q2 What standardised tests do you use for reading?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3 How do you first determine a pupil has a reading difficulty? You may choose more than one answer.

☐ Via whole school testing e.g. baseline testing (1)

☐ The pupil asks to be tested because they are experiencing difficulties (2)

☐ Teacher referral (3)

☐ Parental referral (4)

☐ Professional Reports e.g. Ed Psych or Form 8 from previous school (5)

Q4 What Access Arrangements do you use for helping poor reading issues?

○ Reader pen (23)

○ PDF/computer reader (26)

○ Human reader (27)

○ Own room to enable the pupil to read aloud (28)

○ Extra time (29)

○ Coloured overlay or coloured modified paper (30)

○ A combination of the above (31)
_____

Q5 Do pupils who are awarded Access Arrangements for reading issues accept their arrangements?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Sometimes (3)

Q6 How many GCSE pupils in your school have Access Arrangements for reading difficulties?

_____

Q7 How many A-Level pupils in your school have Access Arrangements for reading difficulties?

_____

Q8 Do you have the resources to provide Access Arrangements for your pupils' reading difficulties?

○ Definitely yes (1)

○ Probably yes (2)

○ Might or might not (3)

○ Probably not (4)

○ Definitely not (5)

Q9 Do these arrangements make a difference to the pupil in terms of their ability to access the material being assessed?

○ Definitely yes (1)

○ Probably yes (2)

○ Might or might not (3)

○ Probably not (4)

○ Definitely not (5)

Q10 Are you able to share anonymised data that demonstrate Access Arrangements for reading difficulties have made a difference to a pupil's marks in examinations? If yes, please can you write it below.

_____

Appendix 5 – Student Survey

Pupil Survey

Q1 Name of school. This will be anonymised in the write up of the study.

_____

Q2 What do you feel you have difficulties with when taking exams? You can choose more than one option.

☐ finishing in the required time (1)

☐ reading the paper (2)

☐ writing for long periods of time (3)

☐ maintaining concentration (4)

☐ understanding what the question is asking (5)

☐ Other (6)

Q3 Do you receive extra support in school for example, going to have a one-to-one or small group lesson with a teacher?

○ Yes (1)

○ sometimes - only when I need help (2)

○ No (3)

Q4 If you do receive extra support in school please say how it helps you.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q5 Did you receive extra support in primary school?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Sometimes (3)

Q6 Have you been diagnosed with a specific learning difficulty e.g. Dyslexia which affects your reading ability?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q7 How has your reading difficulty impacted your studies at school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q8 Do your friends ever make comments about your reading difficulty?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Sometimes (3)

Q9 What Access Arrangements have you been awarded in public examinations and internal tests? You may choose more than one.

☐ 25% extra time (1)

☐ 50% extra time (2)

☐ Human reader (3)

☐ Computer reader (4)

☐ Reading Pen (5)

☐ Laptop (6)

☐ Scribe (7)

☐ Own room (8)

☐ Prompt (9)

☐ Rest breaks (10)

☐ Other (11)

Q10 Do these Access Arrangements help you when you take exams and tests?

○ Yes (1)

○ No, I never use them (2)

○ Sometimes (3)

Q11 Do you receive the same Access Arrangements for all subjects?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q12 Do you think you could complete an exam without your Access Arrangements in place and demonstrate your ability?

○ Definitely yes (1)

○ Probably yes (2)

○ Might or might not (3)

○ Probably not (4)

○ Definitely not (5)

Q13 How supportive have your school been in helping you get the correct Access Arrangements for your reading difficulty?

○ Very (1)

○ Not very (2)

Q14 What do you do to help improve your reading issues?

☐ Read and listen to audio books at the same time (1)

☐ Turn documents into PDF and use the reading facility
(2)

☐ Attend support lessons to specifically target your
reading issues (3)

☐ Use reading software on your computer to access the
information you have to learn (4)

☐ Use a reading pen to understand words you do not
recognise (5)

☐ Read aloud   (6)

☐ Other (7)

Q15 If you chose Other in Q14 please can you explain what you do
to help improve your reading issues.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q16 Did you choose your subjects based on the amount of reading you thought was needed for them?

○ Definitely yes (1)

○ Probably yes (2)

○ Might or might not (3)

○ Probably not (4)

○ Definitely not (5)

Q17 Would you be willing to take part in a short interview?

○ Yes. If yes, please leave contact details (1)

_____

○ No (2)

Appendix 6 – Parent/Guardian Survey

Parental/Guardian Survey

Q1 Name of school. This will be anonymised in the write up of the study.

_____

Q2 When was your child first diagnosed with their reading difficulty?

○ primary school (1)

○ secondary school (2)

Q3 Has their reading difficulty impacted their schooling?

○ Yes (1)

○ Maybe (2)

○ No (3)

Q4 If Yes to Q3, please can you explain further how their reading difficulty has impacted their schooling.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q5 Has their reading difficulty impacted their self-esteem?

○ Yes (1)

○ Maybe (2)

○ No (3)

Q6 If Yes to Q5, please can you explain how their reading difficulty has impacted their self-esteem.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q7 Did your child have specialist support at primary school for their reading difficulty?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Sometimes (3)

Q8 Did your child receive Access Arrangements in primary school?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q9 Does your child currently receive specialist support in school for their reading difficulty?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Sometimes (3)

Q10 What Access Arrangements does your child currently receive when taking exams? You may choose more than one.

☐ 25% extra time (1)

☐ 50% extra time (2)

☐ Human reader (3)

☐ Computer reader (4)

☐ Reading Pen (5)

☐ Own room (6)

☐ Rest breaks (7)

☐ Scribe (8)

☐ Laptop (9)

☐ Other (10)

Q11 Do you believe these arrangements support your child when taking exams?

○ Definitely yes (1)

○ Probably yes (2)

○ Might or might not (3)

○ Probably not (4)

○ Definitely not (5)

Q12 Would you be willing to take part in a short interview?

○ Yes. If yes, please leave details (1)

_____

○ No (2)

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix 7 – School Consent letters

SENCO Address

June 2018

Dear …………

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to take part in a research programme. I am embarking on a research project for my Doctoral Thesis looking into Access Arrangements. It will look at the processes that affect Access Arrangements in terms of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) annual changes to the rules; who can implement and support Access Arrangements, and views and experiences of pupils and their families. The framework for the study will be Bronfenbrenner's Model of Bioecological Development (2005). I plan to send a questionnaire to SENCOs/Specialist Teachers in secondary schools across the country to ascertain their experiences and views with regard to Access Arrangements. In addition, I would like to go into schools to collect views of pupils with specific reading difficulties on how they are supported through Access Arrangements. The school study would involve you completing the SENCO questionnaire and a short interview about your experiences and views on Access Arrangements. It would also involve you selecting a pupil with reading difficulties that has Access Arrangements.

To make this study robust I would like to interview pupil/s who have poor reading skills and ask them if they would be willing to complete a brief questionnaire and take part in a short interview. I would also like to interview the parents of the pupil/s to gain their understanding of the process. If you were to identify the pupil and parents I would be willing to contact them and explain the process.

I am planning on using the information gathered by the SENCO/Specialist Teacher questionnaire and the School Study to write my thesis to complete my Educational Doctorate Degree. Enclosed are the letters you can send out to those pupils/parents you have identified, or I can send them for you.

Taking part in the study is purely voluntary. If you sign up, and then have second thoughts, you can withdraw from the study at any time and without needing to give a reason.

All information gained from the study will be anonymised; no one will know your name or views. If you are interested in knowing what the findings are from the study, then I will send you a copy of the findings or discuss it with you once I have written my thesis.

If you are happy to take part in this study by completing a questionnaire and taking part in an interview, then please can you sign the consent form below and either email it to me or send it. The interviews can take place next term in September/October 2018. I am happy to discuss this further with you if you wish. The whole process should not take long.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely

Emily McGhee MA SpLD, 17/APC12063
Email: e.mcghee.14@ucl.ac.uk
cc: School's Headmaster

I have read the information above about the research and am happy to take part.

☐ (please tick)

I am happy to complete the questionnaire and take part in an interview which may be recorded.

☐ (please tick)

I am happy to contact parents of pupils who have reading difficulties to take part in this study.

☐ (please tick)

❖ **Please sign and date this form as permission to participate in this study.**

Name _____

Signed _____   date _____

Parents/Guardians' Letter

Date

Dear Parents/Guardians

I am embarking on a research study for my thesis as part of my Educational Doctorate Degree at IOE/UCL. The research will investigate Access Arrangements to understand how they support pupils with a specific reading difficulty. Your SENCO, ………., has written to you and I understand that you may be willing to participate in this study. The research involves you completing a short questionnaire and for your child to do the same. After the questionnaires have been completed, if you are willing, I would value the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the findings of the questionnaire. The results will be written up as part of my doctoral thesis.

The study will commence in the Autumn term, 2018. Please discuss the study with your child to make sure they are also happy to participate. I would like to record the interviews to help with my note taking. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary, even once you have consented to take part in the study, you may withdraw at any time, if you feel you do not wish to continue.

The information from the study will be anonymised so that the no student, parent, or school will be identifiable in any write-up and the data will be kept confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The findings from the study will be written up for the thesis and available to you if you wish.

Please sign the enclosed consent form if you are happy for you and your child to take part and return it to me. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours faithfully

Emily McGhee MA SpLD, 17/APC12063Email:
e.mcghee.14@ucl.ac.uk

Parents/Guardians' Address
Consent form

Name of Project: **Access Arrangement Study**
Start and end dates: **Autumn Term 2018**
Name of Supervisor: **Professor Jackie Masterson & Dr Maria Kambouri**
Supervisor's email: **j.masterson@ucl.ac.uk &**
m.kambouri@ucl.ac.uk

Research Proposal

The purpose of this research is to look in detail at the Access Arrangement process and the effects on the pupil. The research will investigate this via Bronfenbrenner's Model of Bioecological Development (2005).

The study will be conducted during the Autumn Term, 2018. It has been given Ethics Approval by UCL Institute of Education. If you have any questions regarding this study please contact myself or my supervisors using the contact details above.

All information will be anonymised and kept confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Participants in the study will have the right to withdraw at any time, if they wish to, and without giving a reason. All information gained in the study will be shared with you on completion.

I have read the information letter about the research. ☐
(please tick)
I will allow my child to take part in the study. ☐
(please tick)
I will allow my child to complete a questionnaire. ☐
(please tick)
I am happy for my child to attend an interview, and for this to
be recorded, as I have discussed the study with my child
and she/he is happyto take part. ☐
(please tick)
I too (parent/guardian) am happy to participate in the study,
complete a questionnaire and attend a short interview. ☐
(please tick)

❖ **Please sign and date this form as consent to participate in this study.**

Name _____

Signed _____   date _____

Pupil's Name_____

Researcher's name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

End Notes:

i
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