



THE NATIONAL SEND FORUM Minutes 02nd February 2022

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present: David Bateson OBE (DB) *Chair*, Lorraine Petersen OBE (LP) *FLSE*, Rona Tutt OBE (RT) *NAHT*, Caroline Wright (CW) *RCSLT*, Carol Kelsey (CK) *NNPCF*, Chris Rollings (CR) *FLSE*, Julie Walker (JW) *sen.se*, Kiran Hingorani (KH) *SWALSS/NASS*, Stephen Deadman (SD) *NAHE*, Hajira Liaquat (HL) *NSN*, Clare Dorer (CD) *NASS*, Annamarie Hassall MBE (AH) *nasen*, Richard Boyle (RB) *engage*, Di Caesar (DC) *PDNET*, Margaret Mulholland (MM) *ASCL*, James Waller (JWA) *Equals*,

Guests: Lorraine Mulrooney (LM) *NHS*, Geoff Hinkins (GH) *IMPower*, Rosie Thomas-Easton (RTE) *IMPower*, Andre Imich OBE (AI) *DfE*

Minutes: Andy Petersen (AP)

1. Welcome and Introductions

For Action

DB welcomed and thanked everyone for joining this virtual meeting

2. Congratulations

DB extended the group's congratulations on AI's investiture as an OBE and Mark Blois's naming by the Shaw Trust as one of the 100 most influential people in their Disability Power list and also his naming as one of the leading lawyers in the country.

3. Protocol for meeting

DB went through some protocols for this virtual meeting

4. Apologies

Brendan Heneghan, Jane Carter, Kim Taylor

5. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were agreed with a minor alteration.

6. Policy and DfE update

AI updated the meeting on progress with the SEND review which had come about due to the increased demands on the SEN system. The review was committed to ensuring improved outcomes for young people. There was a lot of evidence that we need to be working to support mainstream schools to fulfil their responsibilities in a more equal way across the country and improve quality across the board whilst ensuring that the system is more sustainable financially in the long run.

Some of the key issues are how we can reduce local variation and mitigate variation or the “post code lottery”.

AI felt that schools did not have a strong enough sense of where they stand in terms of benchmarking in relation to schools around them, schools in their local area, or nationally. Thus we need to align funding and accountability better than it is at the moment.

To achieve this a steering group had been set up crossing across government departments, schools, colleges and parents.

AI anticipated that a Green Paper would be published in the next 8 weeks. This would be followed by a consultation. AI suggested that NSEND might want to make a collective response to this exercise.

DB said that he had three written requests to cover in the discussion relating to the early careers framework and the capacity and knowledge of the new teaching and curriculum hubs.

RT queried how better outcomes would be judged for children with special needs. AI responded that there would be a focus on securing employment and training after leaving school and not being in the NEETS population, thus making sure that the whole system is working towards improving independence when leaving the system. Thus greater clarity was needed on how children are prepared for adulthood. For example, Government was aiming to double the number of supported internships over the next three years and have announced yesterday some additional funding on that.

CR commented that in many different forums the commentary was about what's going to change in terms of initial teacher training and what's going to change in terms of the actual training of schools and services in writing better education, health care plans? Also, what's going to change in education, health and care plan about role of partners in health and social care? However, rumours suggested that the review would not be well funded by the Treasury.

AI responded that he was unable to comment on Treasury funding, however some funds had already been committed for example the £1.6 billion increase in high needs funding from April onwards. Inevitably, there were going to be messages about teacher's skills, and development. So there will be a recognition of the need to improve not just capacity, but the skills and knowledge of the workforce.

LM commented that she was working one day on week on the SEND review. But it had to align with some of her other work around the long-term plan.

JWA commented that Equals had been working with their local hub in delivering a programme to their ECTs. However some of the course was more related to mainstream schools rather than specialist settings and required ECTs to adopt “bad practice” in such settings. Thus the national framework did not reflect the skills needed on the ground.

AI commented that the ECT programme was based on expert contributions to its planning. It was designed in consultation with the wider education sector, but it did include SEND specialists and representatives from special schools. However, he would pass JWAs comments to the early career framework team for them to consider.

MM commented that she too had heard similar comments to JWAs from other providers. She felt that the new teacher handbook might assist with this problem. A huge number of people had contributed to the [handbook](#) and the [ITT resources](#) available on the SEND Gateway.

AH commented that the handbook was very much aimed at inclusion in mainstream and the need was to develop progress measures that are more widely accepted in specialist provision that also have a read across into mainstream. AH gave a commentary on the work of nasen at the moment towards improving outcomes for children. Nasen's goal was to bring coordination, and less fragmentation.

LP commented that previously some teaching schools were special schools and were therefore able to provide the skills required for this area. Now that Teaching Hubs had replaced Teaching Schools it was found that their work was very much focused on mainstream practice. Basically, there didn't seem to be the support for the specialist sector through either the curriculum or teaching hubs.

DB commented that training was also required for non-teaching professionals to assist them with recognising special needs children and their individual difficulties.

AI responded that some teaching hubs had been set up to include specialist provision but this was clearly not enough. JW commented that her hub was addressing this but it was only in the early stages.

MM commented that continuing the specialist work of teaching schools was proving to be a challenge given the change in infrastructure. MM felt that the specialist sector needs tailored provision, as well as the opportunity to collaborate across mainstream special, and the system needed to be able to cater for both.

DC commented that therapeutic provision needed to be aligned with the teaching and learning experiences and the access to the curriculum so as to ensure the best journey into adulthood.

SD commented that whilst there were "pots of money" available, it was often left up to LAs to decide how this was passed on which caused problems in both outcomes and equality between areas.

AI responded that LAs had got a very clear message that they need to be in conversation with special schools about high needs funding and its distribution. AI commented that he hoped the next time the high needs funding operational guidance was amended there be much greater clarity about this issue.

7. NNPCF and the National SEND consortium project

CK introduced RT and GH. RTE made a presentation about the work of the consortium project.

CR commented that current policies showed a lack of vision for children and young people beyond the age of 19. CR felt that the Consortium had an opportunity to signpost their work and to develop a vision for the future of young people.

GH agreed that there hadn't been that vision at either national or at a local level but the consortium intended to contribute to the adding of value by holding conversations with organisations such as NSEND.

CR commented that the new Ofsted framework talking about intent, implementation and impact. This had made people think quite strategically about starting points, where they wanted to go and how to do it, and also what the outcome looked like at the end.

DB commented that there had always been an issue about short-term planning in budgets related to political power cycles and the Consortium could talking long term possibly thinking ahead to budgets in 50 years' time.

CD commented that "value" was an immensely complex area. This was potentially looking at something that was going to be different for every single child and young person. Children were all different. So what counted as value for a child who has needs which end up being successfully met by the first mainstream school they go to, would be quite different from a child who has been through many different placements. NASS had prepared a piece some years ago which had been discussed at the Forum on [social return on investment](#). This highlighted that in terms of value, such as return to society and public purse, there were big savings available, but different measures were needed to fit different needs.

CD asked the following question on chat – Is this the work that was advertised by DfE as “Better value in SEND” tender opportunity late last year? She also commented on the name of the CONSORTIUM - were they aware that the Outcomes First Group is a very large commercial group of fostering, children’s homes and special school providers? Neither of these points were answered during the meeting.

GH commented that finding a way of balancing those kinds of nationally available statistical data sets against more qualitative data on outcomes for cohorts and individuals within local areas was something the consortium were discussing.

DB commented that the percentage of people with a disability, who never get a job, and the percentage who were able to retain job suggested there was something clearly critically broken in society and the nation got poor value as a result.

Thus, there was nothing homogenous about special educational needs and disabilities which was a complex area due to the wide range of need.

SD commented that when local authorities talk about value for money, often what they see is a particular provision that has a lot more funding and they're looking for ways to reduce that and address their own funding shortfalls. Decisions had to be made as to what was essential and what was a “luxury”. SD felt that investment could translate into savings later on in things like social care. Thus having long term vision was essential.

CD commented on chat that she agreed with Stephen – their study showed the return on investment of meeting needs – not of one type of setting over another. She continued with investment in childhood is only ‘sound’ if appropriate support for adulthood is in place.

DB commented that early intervention and long term investment would be repaid.

RT commented that politicians often wanted short term results. RT felt that it was difficult to redirect their thinking to more long-term goals.

KH commented that there were conflicts and contradictions between outcomes, costs, inclusion and value. LAs often sought to place young people in situations which are more cost effective, but actually, the value is less. Cost effective decisions often had the wrong metrics attached to them.

ALL

DC commented that value was an immensely complex area. The study needed to consider how happy the child and their family or the young person was, how satisfied they are, and how independent they were. A measure of that outcome was needed national and regionally.

RTE/DB

DB commented that the UK was 22nd in the league table of “happy” children.

CD questioned whether there was scope in the work to assess the cost of wrong decisions.

RTE responded that the experiential aspect in terms of children and young people, young adults, and parent carer perspective was very much at the forefront of THE CONSORTIUM’s work.

DB felt that the quality of process, as well as outcome was really important.

RTE commented that she would appreciate any information that NSEND members could supply. CK would act as a key link between the CONSORTIUM and NSEND. GH commented that the CONSORTIUM envisaged a timeframe for completion by April 2022.

DB requested that RTE send him the slides for distribution to the group.

8. Update on Regional Centres of Expertise NSEND Research

No update was available from MR

9. Update from members: successes, issues and events

ENGAGE – a [mental wellbeing audit](#) was being launched and was being developed with Sharon Grey. An engage and connect programme which were basically forums like NSEND for various issues to do with SEMH. The next one was on the 10th of February with Bernard Allen. RB suggested that members visit the [website](#) in order to find out more about the Arts Awards and a football competition.

Equals – [Virtual training](#) was on-going on supporting children with severe and profound learning difficulties and semi-formal approaches to teaching in schools. Regional curriculum conferences where people come together in a region and shared their use of semi formal, pre-formal and informal approaches to teaching in specialist settings were also in progress. An assessment conference was planned at Birmingham University. The [annual conference](#) was planned at NCVO in Central London for June.

FLSE - A medicines and specialists group skills meeting had recently been held whilst 2 other meetings were planned. CCGs were transitioning to Integrated Care Services – this would require a lot of work in actually finding out what the commissioning routes were going to be in our local areas to actually get the services from our health colleagues that the children and young people need. This also fed into the disparity between geographic areas.

NAHE - a Summer Leadership Conference was planned in Manchester over two days, 30th June/1 July. A “working on the wards” conference was planned for September in Wolverhampton.

NAHT – An equalities, inclusion, and diversity strand of work was in progress which had already produced a book [“You are not Alone - Leaders for Race Equality](#) – 14 Stories from Education. An LGBT+ and a disabled members network had also been initiated. An equalities Conference was planned for September. NAHT’s main conference was planned for early May. The SEND Conference was planned for 19th of October. RT passed on some information re a future NAHT project. Finally, RT was elated that the BSL bill was going forward to gain legal status.

Nasen – Excited to be working with a number of partners and further conversations will follow about how we can work together in the future to shape a pathway route for CPD across all ages. This will have mainstream schools at the core and specialist providers will be able to access. Excellent CPD opportunities already available. Last week we launched an assistive technology project with Microlink to test out some approaches to assistive technology in schools. Later this month we are releasing a report developed in partnership with PPUK on dual and multiple exceptionalities.

NSN – TL gave a summary of the work of NSN and their relationship with Special Schools.

RCSLT – Have been helping with the health care bill as it goes through the House of Lords as part of the children young people's health policy influencing group which was coordinated by the National Children's Bureau. RCSLT had published [a report](#) about the sustained impact of the pandemic on speech and language therapy services based on a survey of members. This had been shared with NHS England.

SEN.se – The project to work with local artists and promote mental health had commenced. The training provider for the project with Avon and Somerset Police had been recruited and it was hoped to go live in September. SEN.se was considering developing occupational therapy apprenticeships to fill a gap in provision. A research project around preparation for adulthood with Bath Spa University was under way. The programme to support early career teachers continued and SEN.se were going to be involved in a conference on the ninth of June to support mainstream schools around preparation for adulthood.

SWALSS – The conference had recently taken place. A highlight had been powerful presentation by the St. Giles charity, the focus of which was how young people get involved in county lines, gangs, drug running, and all the associated crimes. A range of online activities was going on for middle leaders and for leadership for governors. The deputies conference was scheduled to take place in May.

ASCL – had developed a “Blueprint for a Fairer system”. ASCL had identified a dashboard for inclusion indicators which MM hoped to share with NSEND in the future. There was also a focus on the virtual school heads role and how ASCL might support virtual school heads to develop best practice in terms of partnering with school leaders. A further focus at the moment was the attendance agenda and the classification of mental health problems for Children and Young people with SEND.

PDNET – had experienced its best year ever in 2021, increasing membership, increasing use of traded services. In 2022, PDNET’s theme was going to be all about making things better for children and young people with physical disability. The conference would focus on making things better. PDNET had also launched a pupil voice competition, ironically entitled, “If I were Prime Minister for a day”! Finally a low incidence needs and assistive technology webinar on March the ninth

BATOD NatsIP – Every year, BATOD, on behalf of the Ovenden Hall Foundation, and in conjunction with the Ewing Foundation, administers the Con Powell Scholarship to provide bursaries for teachers wishing to train as Teachers of the Deaf but whose LA or school are not obliged to support them financially.

The BATOD Mentoring scheme for qualified Teachers of the Deaf has started.

Following the launch of BATOD's Tier 1 Online language modification course BATOD will be launching a Tier 2 course. Individuals, who are BATOD members, who successfully complete Tier 2 can move on to be a BATOD Language Modifier, working with a range of awarding bodies.

Natsip - has produced a briefing note for refugee families with a child with a sensory loss which has been shared with the DfE.

NatsIP were also working with NHS England in the rollout of the Hearing Screening checks (in residential schools for learners with SEND - autism and complex needs at this pilot stage) on producing guidance for parents and carers.

NASS – Have been gearing up for the SEND Review by running consultation meetings with their members so they can respond to the consultation once it is launched.

10. Relevant updates from other affiliations, forums, trusts, alliances and partnerships

Nothing to report

11. NSEND operation

Nothing to report

12. Any focus for action and statements of agreement including future invitees

Nothing to report

13. AOB

Nothing to report

14. Dates

Next Meeting to be held on 30th March 2022 (Venue/format) to be arranged

DB

Meeting Closed at 12.30am