

## Monitoring Table 2024

Action planned or taken by relevant authorities to address  
'Too Little, Too Late' recommendations

| Colour Key | Number   |
|------------|--|
|            | Clear progress evident 11                      |
|            | Evidence of fledgling progress or potential 28 |
|            | No evidence of progress 1                      |

*NB: Several of the recommendations comprise two or more sub-recommendations. Note that RAG status for progress made is assigned to the recommendation overall, rather than separately for each sub recommendation.*

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| PROGRESS AGAINST RECOMMENDATIONS TABLE   |   |   |
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| <p><b>Accessibility, Availability and Effectiveness of Statutory Supports and Services (Recommendations 1 – 8)</b></p> <p><i>Since the publication of Too Little Too Late, the five stage approach to identification, assessment and provision of Special Education Needs (SEN) has been replaced with three stages of special educational provision on the Schools Information Management System (SIMS). Pupils recorded at the old stage 3 receiving a service have moved to stage 2 on SIMS. Nonetheless, the recommendations below are still applicable.</i></p> |   |   |
| Recommendation   | Action taken or planned since previous update   |   |
| <p>1. The EA must conduct a systematic review of all supports and services for children with SEN. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a review of the accessibility and availability of services, the extent to which they are appropriately resourced, evaluated, and founded on evidence-based practice; and</li> <li>b. a review of the gaps in services, including the lack of numeracy support services for children and young people with dyscalculia.</li> </ul>   | <p>Upon formal approval of funding for the four additional projects under the SEND Transformation Programme (STP) in late August 2022, recruitment began to fill the roles required, '22 until an EA wide recruitment freeze was put in place in October 2022. In April 2023, the EA was notified that the STP's 2023/24 budget allocation would be £1.9m rather than the £3.8m set out in the programme OBC. As a result, the programme contracts of 12 FTE staff were wound up in July 2023, leaving a core programme staff of 17.8 FTE staff set against the 44 detailed in the original OBC.</p> <p>This had significant implications for the scope/scale of work that could be delivered by the STP within existing timeframes (by September 2024). When the 2023/24 budget reduction was confirmed, the first mitigation considered by the STP Board was to retain the existing project plan, but extend it by a year. This option was discounted by the Programme Board, given the urgency</p> | <p>NICCY acknowledges that a reduction in funding, and related impacts on project resourcing and staffing, has required significant changes to the scope and scale of the STP. While disappointing, we welcome that the approach taken, which involves rescoping of the plan rather than simply extending timeframes, will allow some progress to be made by September 2024. In particular, the plan to introduce a 'reshaped PPS model' by Sept 2024 is positive. As noted, this involves working towards the introduction of 8 regional SEND support services which will be moved into integrated, local, phase-specific teams (LITs). Each team will triage and plan tailored intervention across all Stage 2 needs regardless of SEND category presenting. We welcome</p> |

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|  | <p>of stakeholder need and the likely persistence of current budget pressures. Since then, the STP team engaged with service leads across the EA to re-scope the plan.</p> <p>The STP project teams have been able to complete extensive baselining work, literature reviews and comparator analysis across various jurisdictions. Their findings were to have been the subject of extensive external stakeholder engagement across the final term of the 2022/23 academic year, but resource shifts precluded this. However, a degree of clarity had emerged from that work regarding an operating model which aligns with effective practice in other jurisdictions.</p> <p>Although it is now not feasible to deliver the full scope of the original OBC, by September 2024, the decision has been made to narrow the remaining resource into the focused delivery of a reshaped Stage 2 pupil support service delivery model, making it possible to take a fundamental and substantial step forward within that timeframe. This will involve moving eight of the EA’s separate regional SEND support services into integrated, local, phase-specific teams, each of which would triage and plan tailored intervention across all Stage 2 needs regardless of SEND category presenting. The EA Transformation Project will consider the stage 2 input of EPS only and further review of the EPS will be considered elsewhere.</p> | <p>that this will allow the delivery of tailored interventions to address co-morbidities as opposed to the current situation where children and young people often have to transition sequentially through EA’s services according to their identified primary need.</p> <p>It is vital that the full range of necessary support services to meet needs are in place and subject to ongoing effectiveness monitoring and action taken if/where required.</p> <p>An important benefit of the planned approach will be the removal of the EPS’s current ‘gatekeeping’ role at Stage 2, allowing more consultative psychology support models to be deployed instead. As the response notes, it is expected that such an approach will allow a higher volume of children to be supported, reducing waiting lists. While this is very welcome, it is crucial that monitoring is undertaken to ensure the quality of support provided to children is not negatively impacted in any way.</p> <p>We note that only in the most complex of cases will local teams</p> |
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|  | <p>Subsequent internal stakeholder engagement across the EA’s existing SEND pupil support services has highlighted support for the model presented and given the wider capacity pressures in 2023/24, senior service managers are keen to move to NI-wide roll out (and subsequent stabilisation), sooner rather than later.</p> <p>In line with comparable jurisdictions, the integration of EA’s SEND support services would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow the removal of the Educational Psychology Service’s current ‘gatekeeping’ role at Stage 2, allowing more consultative psychology support models to be deployed instead; and,</li> <li>• allow the intervention models applied by the local teams to be updated, focusing primarily on capacity-building within schools/preschools and the modelling of intervention strategies. Only in the most complex of cases would the local teams intervene on a one-to-one basis with a child or young person.</li> </ul> <p>This would remove current barriers to accessing Stage 2 supports and the shift away from one-to-one intervention models would allow a higher volume of children and young people to be supported simultaneously, reducing waiting lists. It would also deliver tailored interventions to address co-morbidities as opposed to the current situation where children and young people often have to transition sequentially through EA’s services according to their identified primary need.</p> | <p>intervene on a one-to-one basis with a child. More detail on how this will work in practice would be helpful i.e. the criteria involved in determining one-to-one intervention is required. <b>We also request clarification of whether the teams will provide support in-person, virtually or by phone.</b></p> <p>We note from the response that further review of the EPS will be considered elsewhere and <b>request further details of this.</b></p> <p>NICCY understands that the new model is still under development and subject to approval. We consider that significant consultation and engagement with key stakeholders, including parents/carers and teaching staff will be critical to build confidence and trust in the new system.</p> |
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|  | <p>EA’s Corporate Leadership Team and the SEND Transformation Programme Board (co-chaired by DE and has NICCY representation) have both provided authorisation to further develop the proposal. This includes engaging with EA staff, Trade Unions, practitioners, parents/carers, MLAs/Councillors and wider stakeholders. As the operational detail of the new model is developed, that engagement process will continue and the final model will need to be approved at Departmental level before formal implementation begins.</p> <p>Model development is underway with EA services and governance groups and has been presented to the Programme Reference Group, Practitioners Board, APAG, Project Board, Project Advisory Group, NI Principals Forum, Teaching and Non-Teaching Trade Union Forums, and CYPS staff.</p> <p>Further engagement with other key stakeholders, including parents and carers and the wider school sector is also underway. Generally the feedback has been positive. Concerns have been raised about the ambitious nature of the timeframe and the work required to do to meet delivery for September 2024.</p> <p>The University of Ulster’s Rapid Review of Literacy has now been finalised and can be made available on request.</p> <p>:</p> | <p>We note the University of Ulster’s Rapid Review of Literacy has now been finalised and <b>request a copy of the review and also details of how this has informed next steps.</b></p> |
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|  | <p>Implementation of the SEND Act (NI) 2016 – work is continuing in DE on finalising the new SEN Regulations and Code of Practice however these cannot be operationalised until the new Regulations have been passed by the NI Assembly, which is currently not sitting.</p> <p>DE/NITC Review of SEN-Related Workload – this piece of work is complete and consideration is being given to its findings.</p> <p>Review of Suspensions, Expulsions and Informal Exclusions - Following publication of circular in March 2021 the Department has reviewed the arrangements for suspensions and expulsions. The report remains in draft however findings from this review will be considered as part of the ongoing End to end Review of School Improvement under Workstream 8 – Removing Barriers for Children and Young People; rather than under the EA SEND Transformation</p> <p>Review of Multi-Disciplinary – a Memorandum of Understanding is in place with the Department of Health and DE will continue to work closely with other agencies.</p> <p>- DE/DoH - Transitions Working Group – this is now being taken forward as a deep dive under the End to End Review of SEN rather than under the EA SEND Transformation Programme.</p> | <p>Now the NI assembly and Executive are in place; this work should be prioritised.</p> <p><b>Detail of next steps is requested.</b></p> <p><b>NICCY requests sight of the final review once completed.</b></p> <p>The MoU is welcome – sight of this would also be welcome.</p> <p>As noted previously, we consider it vital that timely and adequate services and interventions are in place to support transition processes of young people with SEND. At that time NICCY DE/DoH were exploring</p> |
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|   |   | <p>how the transitions process could support the transitions of children with SEN without a statement. <b>We request an update on progress of this work.</b></p>   |
|   | <p>b. In addition to the above, an internal numeracy group has been established and contacts made with teaching colleges, CCEA and a University in England to progress the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A C2K site to include a range of resources for schools focusing on mathematics and numeracy difficulties.</li> <li>2. Development of training modules for teachers with support from a leading specialist.</li> <li>3. Professional learning opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills of EA PSS staff to enable them to deliver effective numeracy support.</li> </ol>   | <p>We welcome the progress made, including establishment of an internal numeracy group, professional learning opportunities and the development of training opportunities. However, we consider that further action is needed to ensure access to high quality numeracy support for children at the earliest stage possible.</p> |
| <p>2. The EA should review and make explicit the criteria to access Stage 3 services and take all necessary measures to ensure that access to services is always allocated on the basis of need. This should involve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the development of a comprehensive awareness raising programme for schools, EPs and other health and education professionals, to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of the referral criteria for each</li> </ol> | <p>As detailed in October 2023 update in recommendation 1, the proposed model for Stage 2 (New Code of Practice) support currently in development will involve moving each of the EA’s separate regional SEND support services into integrated, local, phase-specific teams, each of which would triage and plan tailored intervention across all Stage 2 (New Coded of Practice) needs regardless of SEND category presenting.</p> <p>In line with comparable jurisdictions, the integration of EA’s SEND support services would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow the removal of the Educational Psychology Service’s current ‘gatekeeping’ role at Stage 2 (New</li> </ul> | <p>As above, development of local integrated teams which will triage and plan tailored intervention across Stage 2 is welcome.</p>   |

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| <p>service;</p> <p>b. the involvement of relevant stakeholders and service users in service reviews; and</p> <p>c. openness, transparency and the use of co-design processes in the restructuring and redevelopment of Stage 3 services.</p> | <p>Code of Practice), allowing more consultative psychology support models to be deployed instead; and,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>allow the intervention models applied by the local teams to be updated, focusing primarily on capacity-building within schools/preschools and the modelling of intervention strategies. Only in the most complex of cases would the local teams intervene on a one-to-one basis with a child or young person.</li> </ul> <p>This would remove current barriers to accessing Stage 2 (New Code of Practice) supports and the shift away from one-to- one intervention models would allow a higher volume of children and young people to be supported simultaneously, reducing waiting lists. It would also deliver tailored interventions to address co-morbidities as opposed to the current situation where children and young people often have to transition sequentially through EA’s services according to their identified primary need.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement was impacted by STP budgetary restrictions in terms of planned practitioner and parent/carer engagement at the end of the 2022/23 academic year. The scale of engagement planned for 2023/24 has also been reduced, but the SEND Transformation team are making full use of its standing stakeholder engagement mechanisms including the Programme Reference Group (which includes parent advocacy groups), Practitioner Forum, Project Advisory Group and Operational Delivery Group, along with currently established DE forums and groups. The SEND</p> | <p>It is very disappointing that engagement with stakeholders has been reduced as a result of budgetary constraints. However we welcome that the SEND Transformation team are making full use of its standing stakeholder engagement mechanisms including the Programme Reference Group (which includes parent advocacy groups), Practitioner Forum, Project Advisory Group and Operational</p> |
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|  | <p>Transformation team has also completed a baseline survey with stakeholders asking for their views and lived experience of the SEND system to date. The survey received almost 1700 submissions with a strong representation from parents and carers and school staff. It will be shared with the joint EA/DE Programme Board in November 2023.</p> <p>A number of parent and carer engagement sessions were also held by the SEND Transformation team in November/December 2022, and March and April 2023 with further engagement planned for November 2023 to present the new proposed integrated model for support.</p> <p>As well as this we have engaged with children and young people with the help of EA’s youth service and plan to engage again to present this new model with assistance from EA’s Youth Service.</p> <p>The EA’s SEND Annual Plan of Arrangements is now live and criteria to access services as they currently operate is included. Consultation ran from March 31 to May 26 2023. Site went live on July 31 2023.<br/> <a href="https://send.eani.org.uk">https://send.eani.org.uk</a></p> <p>Schools were informed as part of Term 1 Communications and asked to disseminate to parents, children and young people.</p> | <p>Delivery Group, along with currently established DE forums and groups</p> <p>The baseline survey with stakeholders asking for their views and lived experience of the SEND system to date is welcome. While findings are very concerning we consider this baseline vital for future comparison.</p> <p>We also welcome that further engagement with parents/carers was held in Nov '23 to present the new proposed integrated model for support.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes the engagement with CYP and plans to engage again to present this new model with assistance from EA’s Youth Service.</p> <p>We also note that the EA’s SEND Annual Plan of Arrangements is live and criteria to access services as they currently operate is included. We do not see a link to Irish medium resources or numeracy support and <b>request confirmation that this is included/referenced in the plan.</b></p> |
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|  |   | <p><b>We also request confirmation that the plan includes / can make available, translated versions for newcomer families.</b></p>  |
| <p>3. Comprehensive Stage 3 pupil support services must be made available. Information on referral pathways, criteria for access, waiting times, expected outcomes and processes for monitoring and evaluation must be transparent and publicly available.</p> | <p>Since the last update, the SEND Transformation Programme budget has been reduced by 50% which has impacted on progress. However, this, together with the current funding crisis, has presented opportunities to move to new models of working more quickly as the pilot stage of the programme has been removed. For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A new interim Request for Involvement Form has been developed which will be introduced in Sept 23 thus reducing the need for schools to make separate referrals to individual services.</li> <li>2. Educational Psychologists (EPs) will no longer carry out mandatory assessments as part of the 'gatekeeper' role and this will be replaced by a consultation only.</li> <li>3. Services will no longer be required to seek consent from parents as this is contained within the form (schools are already required to seek consent before making referrals to services). This should result in faster access to services.</li> </ol> <p>However, due to the rise in the number of Specialist Provisions in mainstream schools (SPiMS) set up for Sept 23, staff have been temporarily redeployed from a range</p> | <p>We note that following budget reduction, the pilot stage of the programme was removed. While this has enabled a move to new models of working more quickly, we do have concerns that removal of the pilot may involve increased risk of unforeseen challenges that could impact on progress.</p> <p>We welcome that a new interim Request for Involvement Form has been developed, introduced in Sept 23, will reduce the need for schools to make separate referrals to individual services, while services will no longer be required to seek consent from parents as this is contained within the form. As noted, it is expected that will result in faster access to services.</p> <p><b>Details of how this will be monitored is requested.</b></p> <p>We note with concern that, due to the rise in the no. of SPiMS, staff have</p> |

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|  | <p>of services to both the SEN Early Years Inclusion Team (SENEYIS) and the Specialist Settings Support Team (SSST) and backfill has not been made available. As a result, the Pupil Support Services have had to review their offer of support in order to ensure CYP continue to be supported. For example, within the Literacy Service, this will mean the introduction of small group intervention (previously only 1-2-1 support has been provided). The staff within the early years phase within AAIS will temporarily transfer to SENEYS and the SENIS SLD team will transfer to SSST. Teams have adjusted their operational delivery plans which will create efficiencies across the system. For example, caseloads can be shared, referrals can be triaged, training materials can be shared and support can be provided more equitably.</p> <p>It is important to note that Pupil Support Services are not statutory services. Further, there has been a dependence on these services - from schools and parents - for many years, to provide high levels of support to individual CYP. Whilst there is no appetite to remove support, it is vital that the programme of offer is reviewed to ensure that it is fit for purpose and that it provides value for money. As a result, there will increased opportunities for capacity building and modelling to school staff in order that they have the skills to support CYP.</p> <p>In regard to ensuring information on Stage 3 pupil support services is available, transparent and publicly available, the Annual Plan of Arrangements (APA) is due to go live</p> | <p>been temporarily redeployed from a range of services to the SEN Early Years Inclusion Team (SENEYIS) and the Specialist Settings Support Team (SSST). PPS have therefore had to review their offer of support e.g. within the Literacy Service, this will mean the introduction of small group intervention (previously only 1-2-1 support has been provided). <b>Further details are requested</b>, including whether this is a temporary solution and how the impact of such modifications on children’s progress is being assessed.</p> <p>The response notes that that Pupil Support Services are not statutory services and that as such it is vital the programme of offer is reviewed. In this context, there will be increased opportunities for capacity building and modelling for school staff in order that they have the skills to support CYP. <b>Further details are requested, including and withdrawal or removal of support.</b> We are aware from ETI’s recent evaluation of TPL that many Teachers consider that they</p> |
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|  | <p>on 31 July 23. This will provide user friendly information to how all services are accessed and will provide timelines and entry and exit criteria. Extensive stakeholder engagement sessions have taken place which have provided useful feedback on how the site can be further improved.</p> <p>Numeracy Support - An internal numeracy group has been established and contacts made with teaching colleges, CCEA and a University in England to progress the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A C2K site to include a range of resources for schools focusing on mathematics and numeracy difficulties.</li> <li>2. Development of training modules for teachers with support from a leading specialist.</li> <li>3. Professional learning opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills of EA PSS staff to enable them to deliver effective numeracy support.</li> </ol> <p>A review of Pupil Support Services is being taken forward as one of the deep dives within DE’s End to End Review of SEN. Initial scoping work has been completed and DE will be engaging with stakeholders in phase 2 of the Review.</p> <p>Early Intervention is another deep dive which includes an examination of current practice and application of the Code of Practice in the early stages in schools and early years settings; the identification of best practice in early intervention for SEN; consideration of early years SEN support models; and how to increase capacity within</p> | <p>do not have the knowledge, skills and understanding to meet their learners’ SEN. We therefore consider that enhanced TPL will be crucial to enable staff to meet pupils’ SEN needs and <b>request detail of same.</b></p> <p>As above (at Rec 2) we welcome publication of the annual plan of arrangements has been published and that this provides user friendly information on how all services are accessed. As advised, this will provide timelines and entry and exit criteria. The details published indicates that timelines and criteria for some services are subject to change due to ‘current significant financial constraints and pressures facing education’. <b>Clarification is requested including which particular services are affected.</b></p> <p>We welcome that extensive stakeholder engagement sessions have taken place, providing useful feedback on how the site can be further improved. <b>We request confirmation of how this feedback has or will be acted upon.</b></p> |
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|  | settings including evidence emerging from current pilots such as the Belfast wide project.  | Numeracy Support – comments as per Rec 2 above.<br><br>Review of Pupil Support Services is welcome and EI deep dive – <b>specific timeframes involved are requested.</b>  |
| 4. The EA must assess the feasibility of using school-based assessment to inform access to Stage 3 services.   | The September 2023 School based consultation form, which will be used as a single form for PSS referrals has been produced. This form will standardise and streamline the pupil support service referral procedure and reduce the administrative burden on Schools and EPS by reducing the amount of necessary paperwork.<br><br>Work has completed with Information Governance and EA legal services to incorporate parental consent in this form at the referral stage, this will reduce unnecessary delays and could mean earlier support for the child.   | As above, this standardised and streamlined approach is welcome. <b>Timeline for implementation is requested, as well as monitoring process involved</b> in assessing timeliness for access to support.   |
| 5. The EA must progress the development and provision of guidance to schools on supplementary evidence-based strategies that can be implemented whilst referrals for assessment are being processed. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A range of training sessions for school staff in relation to supporting pupils with social behaviour emotional and wellbeing needs (SBEW).</li> <li>2. A telephone helpline for schools to seek advice and guidance in relation to presenting SBEW needs.</li> <li>3. Multi-Disciplinary meetings: Behaviour Support officers can be invited to actively contribute and participate in school led multi-agency/ service meetings across all phases. Officers in attendance provide advice and support to respond in a preventative manner, in collaboration with</li> </ol> | NICCY welcomes the range of actions taken which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- training sessions for school staff on SBEW support</li> <li>- telephone helpline</li> <li>- MD meetings</li> <li>- High 5 newsletter &amp; Resource Hub</li> <li>- Nurture in Education programme</li> <li>- Web based resources</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>the school and others, to meet the presenting SBEW and learning needs.</p> <p>4. High Five Newsletter for staff, young people and parents available on the EA webpage, EA Healthwell and C2k Resource Hub. This is issued every two weeks and an Irish language and accessible version is also available.</p> <p>5. The Nurture in Education Programme supports schools to improve SBEW and educational outcomes for children and young people through a whole school nurture approach framework.</p> <p>6. High Five Resource Hub - is accessible whilst logged in a c2k account. This resource hub was developed for primary schools by way of a support platform, including resources, evidence based interventions/ “lift and go” strategies, training and signposting to SBEW resources/ research for school staff.</p> <p>7. Schools and parents can access a range of resources via the EA website. These cover transition from pre-school to P1, from P7 to Post Primary and from year group to year group.</p> <p>8. An EA Behaviour Plan has been developed, communicating an overview of available support from EA Behaviour Support Services.</p> <p>9. An overview of support documentation disseminated to schools, outlining all available support for primary and pre-school settings from EA Primary Behaviour Support and Provisions (PBS&amp;P).</p> <p>10. Development of EA SEN Plan of Arrangements webpage, including a link to PBS&amp;P.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EA Behaviour Plan</li> <li>- EA SEN Plan of Arrangements</li> </ul> <p>We are aware from stakeholder placements of challenges faced accessing places on the Nurture programme. Further detail on the number of places available vs demand would therefore be helpful.</p> |
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|  | <p>11. The Nurture in Education Programme is an early intervention and preventative framework that seeks to embed nurture approaches and ethos within all schools. The programme promotes the principles of nurture to enable children who attend school, in challenging circumstances, to begin to have more consistency and stability in their lives.</p>   |  |
| <p>6. Quality training opportunities and funding for appropriate assessment tools should be provided to EPs by the <a href="#">EA</a>.</p> | <p>For clarity, the Educational Psychology Service recommends the use of the 'least intrusive, most effective' approach to assessment in which assessment is viewed as an ongoing collaborative process involving key people in a child or young person's life and is not dependent on assessment tools. The assessment process aims to be solution focused and it involves the ethical application of knowledge and psychological skills. It involves collaboration with key stakeholders to promote a shared understanding of the child or young person's needs. Educational psychology assessment considers information beyond the individual level taking account of a wide range of variables such as pupil needs, approaches to learning and teaching, school systems. Investment in developing improved assessment methods has been a priority for the Service for the last 5 years. All staff have been trained in solution focused approaches, Faourke, and most recently appreciative inquiry.</p> <p>A training and development group has been established this year to ensure staff are fully equipped to deal with the significant rise in children with significant and complex</p> | <p>We welcome that investment in assessment tools has been prioritised for the past 5 years and that a training and development group has been established this year to ensure staff are equipped to respond to the significant rise in children with significant and complex needs.</p> |

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|  | <p>needs. In addition, the Service has invested in new assessment tools and materials see below.</p> <p>DE provides funding each year for two whole service training days as part of on-going professional development for the Educational Psychology Service (see below for details of training events).</p> <p>CPD (1) took place on 12th December 2022. The keynote speaker was Dr Julian Elliott, University of Durham, who presented on The Dyslexia Debate. Afternoon presentations were provided by Dr Joanna Stanbridge, Cambridgeshire County Council, and Ms Annabel Clarke, Cognition and Learning Essex County Council, on Literacy as a Key Social Justice Issue, and Putting it all into Practice. This was a full day, in-person event at the Crowne Plaza hotel, Belfast. There was a very high level of interest shown by EPS colleagues in this event and a record number were in attendance (188). Evaluations were very positive overall.</p> <p>CPD (2) was organised as a Teams Webinar and took place on 15th March 2023. The keynote speaker was Dr Jerricah Holder and the topic was Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). The morning presentation was entitled Making sense of Emotionally Based School Avoidance and Assessment and Intervention with CYP, their families and school setting. Afternoon presentations were on EBSA and the Statemented Pupil by Joann Guler, and EBSA in the NI Context and families by Dr Hannah-</p> | <p>Provision of funding two whole service training days and subsequent delivery of CPD is welcome.</p> |
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|  | <p>Jane Braiden, Dr Anna Shepherd and Dr Jennifer Chandler. Again, the event was extremely well attended (180) and evaluations were positive.</p> <p>The service purchased several assessment resources as result of these training events.</p> <p>The theme will be Equity and Diversity and the keynote speaker is Dr Bridgette Rickett scheduled for April 2024 funding through QUB as part of their DECAP business case details are not yet available.</p> <p>Educational Psychology Service provided two full training day (in person) s on the 14th and 15th September for all staff.</p> <p>Staff had presentation from DE regarding SEN Transformation – Strategic Direction, also training on the SEN Framework/ Graduated response and a range of operational matters including changes to School Based Consultations, Annual Reviews and Areas Planning etc.</p> <p>The EPS moved to digitalised case management 4 years ago and this involved transitioning across to the Digital Version of a range of Intellectual assessment tools. These tools have now been fully embedded into our Service delivery model and have brought a great many benefits in terms of robustness of data and governance. In January 2023 the EPS will</p> | <p>Purchase of assessment resources is welcome.</p> <p>The move to digitalised case management and related benefits, including in relation to robustness of data and governance, is welcome.</p> |
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|  | <p>move across to new updated Q-interactive App in April 2024. This transition will involve whole Service small group training in February and March 2024 for full implementation April 2024. The new version of Assess contains a modern code base that allows for better performance and a much-improved customer experience. It will also create a new user interface that is easy to navigate and use.</p> <p>Educational Psychologists (EPs) as registered members of the Health and Care Professional Council, have a professional duty to ensure they access Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to keep their skills and knowledge up to date ensuring they can practise safely and effectively. They must maintain a CPD log which is open to random audit every 2 years to ensure that appropriate professional standards are maintained. EPs must adhere to HCPC guidance outlined in the “Continuing professional development and your registration” (2017). The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) ensures that time is ‘ring fenced’ against each staff member’s annual work plan to ensure they can engage in ongoing professional development. To facilitate this process the EPS are currently implementing a revised ‘Supervision Policy’ which includes an oversight of staff professional skill development required within the service to meet business objectives. Training on supervision has been provided to senior managers within the Service in 2021/22.</p> |  |
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|   | <p>Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strengths-based, positive approach to leadership development and organizational change is being rolled out for all Senior Managers within EPS initially the first cohort received training in June 2022 with a second session of training for the whole Service took place in due to take place in September and October 2023.</p> <p>In addition, the EPS have continued to roll out whole service training on ‘solution focused approaches’ as part of a 2-year programme which will be completed in June 2023.</p> <p>Given the importance of continued professional development for the Service given the rise in complexity of SEN the EPS have established a training and development group. Details of their actions are outlined in the document attached.</p> <p>Further training is planned for staff regarding the assessment of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in December 2023 and training on ‘formulation’ in February and March 2024 for the whole Service.</p> <p>See enclosed EPS Training and Induction Action Plan (TIAT) 23/24</p> | <p>Further training for staff regarding the assessment of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in December 2023 and training on ‘formulation’ in February and March 2024 for the whole Service is welcome.</p>                         |
| <p>7. Systems must be developed by the EA to ensure the routine collection and monitoring of waiting time statistics:</p> <p>a. waiting times between a referral for assessment being made by the school and the assessment being</p> | <p>EA has developed processes to routinely capture data in order to monitor waiting times between a referral being made for a stage 3 service to the time that support commences for the child or young person. This includes referrals from all sources, Educational Psychology, community paediatricians, schools and parents. Referrals</p>   | <p>NICCY welcomes the processes that have been developed and notes that data is monitored to identify trends and areas for improvement. <b>We request confirmation that data on waiting time statistics at parts a, b</b></p> |

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| <p>conducted by the EA Educational Psychology Service;</p> <p>b. waiting times between a referral being made for a Stage 3 service and the referral being accepted or not accepted; and</p> <p>c. waiting times between the referral being accepted and the child gaining access to a Stage 3 service.</p> | <p>can be received through the online EA connect portal or in written format. Compliance with target timeframes is also reported. The data is presented on PowerBi dashboards and routinely reviewed by the service to identify trends and areas for improvement. The data is also reviewed by the Directorate Management Team (DMT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) on a quarterly basis as part of EA’s Corporate Performance report.</p>   | <p><b>and c of recommendation 7 are now collected and monitored.</b></p>  |
| <p>8. Processes must be established by the EA to ensure that children with SEN in both statutory and non-statutory early years’ settings can avail of the services and support they require.</p>   | <p>EA CYPS monitors training accessed by pre-school consultation. Referrals to EA Early Years Support Services continue to be received by Community Paediatric triage process with EPS.</p> <p>Non statutory setting have always been able to access support and training from SENEYIS. The additional £0.7m allocated until March 2023 increased this access to training and support for non statutory settings. 193 small group programmes in 122 pre-school settings were completed, including nursery schools, units and playgroups. 65 settings expressed an interest in attending solution focussed hubs with 36 completing the programme (15 playgroups, 14 nurseries and 7 nursery units). Specifically for non statutory we completed a Leadership and Management programme with 41 settings. 416 settings participated in Cluster trainings from April 2022 – March 2023. As of April 2023 Fair Start funding allocation for SENEYIS has been reduced by 50% to £0.37m. This has resulted in the loss of the additional staff secured through previous Fair Start funding. Management is in the</p> | <p>We welcome that EA CYPS monitors training accessed by pre-school settings. Clarification is required of whether all settings are able to equitably avail of all services and supports they require.</p> <p>This is welcome. <b>Proposed timeline for remote access is requested.</b></p> <p>This clarification is welcome.</p> <p>The reduction of Fair Start funding allocation by 50% to £0.37m for SENEYIS, which has resulted in the loss of additional staff is very disappointing.</p> |

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|  | <p>process of aligning the Early Years offer across SENEYIS and Pupil Support Services to improve consistency and equity of support. From Oct 2023 all Early Years referrals across Pupil Support Services will be triaged and allocated centrally through the Early Years Hub.</p> <p>One of the key performance metrics for Early Years is focused on waiting times and this is closely monitored monthly by the service and DMT. The number waiting to access support has decreased in line with targets set.</p> <p>Creation of a developmental language screener and toolkit for pre-school settings-The Post Project Evaluation (PPE) was completed and shared with DE with recommendations for extension pending additional funding. An additional collaborative piece of work has been completed with L&amp;C, Early Year staff across PSS and health colleagues to develop play based activities for early attention and listening. This will include a range of resources, videos, and baseline screeners for use on all pre-school settings.</p> | <p>The response notes that, from October 2023, all Early Years referrals across Pupil Support Services will be triaged and allocated centrally through the Early Years Hub. <b>Confirmation that this has been actioned is requested.</b></p> <p>Decrease in number of those waiting to access support in line with targets is positive. NICCY would welcome further detail.</p> <p>This is welcome – <b>confirmation of whether additional funding was allocated to take this forward is requested.</b></p> |
| <b>Capacity Building in Schools - (Recommendations 9 – 15)</b>   |   |  |
| <b>Recommendation</b>  | <b>Action taken or planned (since previous update)</b>  |  |
| 9. The DE and EA must ensure that all school staff are trained, guided, supported and assessed on their ability to meet the diverse needs of | The Professional Learning and Development service have liaised with CYPS colleagues and collaborating to facilitate webinars for Early Career teachers to raise the profile of a number of services within CYPS. Signposting to the Children and Young People’s Service PL and resources  | We note that it is not within remit of the Education Authority to ensure programmes are mandatory.   |

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| <p>pupils with SEN and disabilities in mainstream schools:</p> <p>a. The EA and Teacher Training institutions must introduce a mandatory programme of early (EPD) and continuous professional development (CPD) for all school staff in identifying, providing for, and ensuring full and equal inclusion of children with SEN. This should expand on the existing Children and Young People’s Services Training Programme 2019-2020<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p>b. Teacher training colleges should ensure that all trainee teachers have opportunity to work in a specialist classroom setting within mainstream and/or in a special school to gain direct experience of assessment/intervention work with children who have SEN and disabilities.</p> <p>c. The DE and EA must ensure comprehensive pre- and in-service SEN and disability</p> | <p>remains a consistent feature of Early Professional Development support. Area Learning Communities are facilitated by the Education Authority to co-create professional learning opportunities that are bespoke to the needs of the teachers within the ALC.</p> <p>The Education Directorate and CYPS teams continue to work together to develop professional learning to support the complex needs in mainstream settings. It is not within the remit of the Education Authority to ensure programmes are mandatory</p> | <p>We welcome that the Professional Learning and Development service have liaised with CYPS colleagues and collaborating to facilitate webinars for Early Career teachers to raise the profile of a number of services within CYPS. Also, that ALCs are facilitated by the EA to co-create professional learning opportunities that are bespoke to the needs of the teachers within the ALC. Continued work to develop professional learning to support complex needs in mainstream settings is also noted.</p> <p>While the above measures are positive, we are concerned by the findings of the ETI’s recent evaluation of TPL which established that TPL to meet learners’ SEN is ‘not sufficiently fit for purpose’. Significantly, only 27% of respondents indicated that they received effective TPL from the EA and statutory funded organisations. We therefore consider that <b>further action is needed.</b></p> |
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/children-and-young-peoples-services-training-programme-2019-2020>

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| <p>equality training for teachers, SENCOs, classroom assistants and other professionals.</p>   | <p>As part of the End-to-End Review of SEN, the Workforce Development deep dive will involve an examination of the current Teacher Professional Learning for SEN including Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development.</p>  | <p>This is welcome. NICCY is aware that the context has changed significantly since our TLTL review was published, including the introduction of SPIMs and a related to this a growing number of pupils with SLD in m/s schools. We consider it crucial that the workforce development deep dive addressed TPL in this context.</p>  |
|  | <p>Continued funding is being made available to schools to support them in preparation for implementing the new SEN Framework.</p> <p>Over £70m has been allocated directly to schools to support implementation of a new SEN Framework to date and this is given over and above the overall package of funding delivered via the Common Funding Formula.</p>  | <p>This is welcome. <b>Further detail of how this funding is being used by schools is requested</b>, as well as how this has been distributed across schools and over what time period.</p>  |
| <p>10. Specific guidance must be provided to teaching staff on the identification and assessment of SEN amongst Newcomer children. Existing assessment of SEN from other countries should be recognised and services provided accordingly.</p> | <p>SEN Guidance<br/>Code of Practice guidance around children with special educational needs is the same for all children regardless of their ethnicity or immigration status. IES teachers provide schools with some advice on identification of SEN in newcomers, including guidance within our 3 toolkits for diversity (Pre-School, Primary and Post-Primary). SEN Advice and Information Service provided two bespoke (and interpreted) parent/carers engagement sessions last year for families from asylum seeking and refugee backgrounds and we intend to do more this year. These covered how children’s learning can be supported</p> | <p>We welcome that IES teachers provide schools with advice on identification of SEN in newcomers, including guidance within 3 toolkits for diversity. <b>Links to these toolkits is requested.</b></p> <p>We also welcome the provision of parent/carers engagement sessions by SAIS for families from ASR backgrounds, which included an overview of SEN identification,</p> |

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|   | <p>in school and an overview of SEN identification, assessment and provision.<br/>Multi-Agency Pilot Mid-Ulster<br/>The EA Ed Psych and Early Years Intervention Service have written up the findings of the pilot project in Dungannon and a training session will soon be offered to schools on the sensory motor programme in partnership with the local Occupational Therapists in the RISE team. If funding can be found in future this multi-disciplinary approach will be widened to other areas.<br/>STARS<br/>Support from STARS does not focus solely on children with identified special educational needs but is tailored to the presenting needs of Asylum Seekers and is trauma informed. The STARS team have been involved in delivering a variety of training / continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities to staff, professionals, and key stakeholders, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the creation of three therapeutic stories and accompanying guidebook</li> <li>• presenting at the IES Good Practice Day (to appx. 100 school attendees)</li> <li>• facilitating group Theraplay training (to 16 EA staff across 5 EA settings / services)</li> <li>• STARS cluster groups held on four occasions (with 100 attendees from 77 school settings).</li> </ul> | <p>assessment and provision, with plans for further sessions.</p> <p>As noted last year, multi-agency pilot project, with a focus on early identification of SEN, is welcome.</p> |
| <p>11. The EA must introduce robust evaluation of learning and development opportunities, to monitor reach throughout the region, and</p> | <p>An EA cross-directorate working group has been set up which will review all aspects of TPL across the organisation and the first meeting of this group took place in July 23, with follow up meeting scheduled for Aug 23.</p>  | <p>We welcome that an EA cross-directorate working group has been set up which will review all aspects of TPL across the organisation. This</p>                                   |



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| <p>impact on the knowledge, skill and capacity of professionals supporting children with SEN in mainstream settings.</p>  | <p>This includes what training is available, how content is quality assured and reviewed, audience and access, with a view to centralising this. This will ensure duplication is reduced and training gaps are identified (which is already underway with Health). It will also allow for identification of all training offered to schools/staff which will inform metrics.</p> <p>Significant development work has taken place to capture the metrics of professional learning opportunities which monitor reach across localities and phases. As professional learning opportunities are developed, evaluations are created to capture the outcome against the key objectives. Outcome of evaluations support planning and internal evaluation</p> | <p>aims to ensure duplication is reduced and training gaps are identified (which is already underway with Health). Response notes that a follow up meeting was scheduled for Aug 2023. <b>An update on progress is requested</b> and that this work is specifically SEN focused.</p> |
| <p>12. Area based learning clusters must be consistently and regularly facilitated by the EA across the region as a mechanism for staff in pre-school, primary and post-primary settings, including both mainstream and special schools, to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>share learning and best practice techniques;</li> <li>identify opportunities for collaboration; and</li> <li>facilitate transition planning.</li> </ol> | <p>Area Learning Communities are facilitated and supported by School Improvement Professionals. ALC Coordinator conferences facilitated by EA have given further opportunity for sharing of practice and extending networks.</p> <p>Pathways into Partnership Primary Area Learning communities are supported by School Improvement Professionals and bespoke resources. All networks are facilitated to allow for effective collaboration and to share effective practice.</p> <p>The Supporting Learning website hosts a range of case studies and learning modules that shares learning and effective practice techniques.</p>   | <p>This is welcome.</p> <p>We welcome that networks are facilitated to allow for effective collaboration and to share effective practice.</p>  |

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|  | <p>The Transitions Service contributes to the work of the SEND Implementation team with engagement at SENCO clusters and other training where required to share good practice in transition planning for children in Year 10 onwards. The Transitions Service also attends transition reviews for individual children to ensure appropriate pathways are being considered.</p> <p>The SEND Implementation team attend the Area Learning Communities on request.</p> | <p>This is welcome.</p> <p>This is welcome.</p> <p>This is welcome.</p> <p>Last year’s update confirmed that a scoping exercise was underway to review cluster arrangements across EA services. <b>We request details of the outcome of that exercise.</b></p>                              |
| <p>13. School leaders, including Boards of Governors and Principals, must be supported to foster an inclusive culture and ethos founded on equality, and to ensure that children with SEN and disabilities maximise their educational potential.</p> | <p>The current Specialist Support in Mainstream settings team are developing a range of resources to support inclusive practices.</p> <p>The Department has a specific objective within its draft corporate plan to explore the ‘Towards Inclusion’ agenda. Work in this area will be developed in conjunction with stakeholders.</p>   | <p><b>NICCY requests further detail</b>, including specific focus of the resources, target audience and timelines for this work.</p> <p><b>More detail on the ‘Towards Inclusion’ agenda is requested</b>, including the scope of this work and plans for engagement with stakeholders.</p> |

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| <p>14. Schools should be inspected by the <a href="#">Education Training Inspectorate (ETI)</a> on their willingness and ability to establish the conditions required to foster an inclusive culture.</p> | <p>In August 2023, following its wide and comprehensive consultation exercise, the ETI published its consultation findings on the development of inspection; available at: <a href="https://www.etini.gov.uk/news/eti-publishes-findings-consultation-development-inspection">https://www.etini.gov.uk/news/eti-publishes-findings-consultation-development-inspection</a>. This work focused on the creation of a clear and impactful role and purpose for ETI through the creation of a new vision and mission. Its new vision, ‘to be the voice for equity and excellence for all learners’, highlights the need for the education system to address the inequities that exist within it, to provide equal and inclusive learning opportunities for all learners.</p> <p>The new model of inspection, developed through a process of co-design with all stakeholders, focuses on ‘equity and inclusion’ as a key element of provision, with associated quality indicators being used in the pilot inspections taking place throughout this academic year. All inspections, when not impacted by the industrial action of teaching unions, include an inspection of the willingness and ability of the school/organisation to establish the conditions required to foster an inclusive culture.</p> <p>A key driver for the work of ETI and a principle of inspection is to be ‘proportionate to need’, to be evaluating elements of practice that learners need us to be looking at. Alongside individual organisation inspection, the ETI is undertaking system-level evaluations and disseminations of effective practice focused on equity and inclusive practice. Examples to date include evaluation, policy advice and exemplars of effective practice on: DE’s newcomer policy and the use of the newcomer premium; digital devices and digital</p> | <p>Publication of the consultation report is welcome.</p> <p>We also welcome the development of a new model of inspection focusing on ‘<i>equity and inclusion</i>’ as a key element of provision and that all inspections, when not impacted by the industrial action of teaching unions, include an inspection of the willingness and ability of the school/organisation to establish the conditions required to foster an inclusive culture. We note that the current gap in inspections is a barrier to the implementation of this recommendation.</p> |
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|  | <p>skills; the impact of shared education, including shared campuses; the DE’s qualification support programme; and, teacher professional learning to support special educational needs.</p> <p>NICCY welcomed ETI’s publication of ‘Stepping Up &amp; Stepping Forward: a Series of Ten Learning Insights’, as “a valuable resource which addresses issues that include an inclusive approach to decision making, working collaboratively and the importance of a curriculum that reflects the values, culture and priorities of society”. The ETI has built on this work to create a series of ‘phase insight reports’ which will issue in the next few months. These insight reports recognise the work of schools/organisations in responding constructively and impactfully to the opportunities available to, and the challenges being faced by, our education system, and the children and young people and their families.</p> <p>In November 2023, as part of the Customer Service Excellence external accreditation, ETI was awarded the highest level of ‘compliance plus’ for its work on engagement and consultation, evidenced in part by the co-design work on learner participation in inspection, and in support of schools’ self-evaluation of learner participation. By supporting schools to self-evaluate their own effectiveness in engaging all learners in aspects of school life and decisions that affect them through the production of self-evaluation tools and the hosting of ‘empowering improvement’ seminars, the ETI aims to help schools monitor and improve their inclusive practices</p> |  |
| <p>15. ETI should inspect schools on their ability to fulfil their duties regarding the preparation and review of Individual</p> | <p>The ETI carried out a survey of SEN Learning Support Centre provision in mainstream schools, including the support provided by the Education Authority. The evaluation was to be completed in 2022 but its publication has been delayed as the remit of the</p>  | <p><b>NICCY requests sight of this evaluation upon completion.</b></p> |

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| <p>Education Plans (IEPs)<sup>2</sup>. Where health and social care provision is to be made, the <b>Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)</b> should work with ETI to ensure compliance of the statutory duty upon every children’s authority to cooperate<sup>3</sup>. This should include an <u>assessment</u> by ETI and/or RQIA of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the effectiveness of collaborative processes to support the joint planning and identification of pupil targets and outcomes in IEPs between education and health professionals;</li> <li>evidence from schools that children and parents/carers have been facilitated to actively contribute to the process; and</li> <li>the extent to which outcomes identified within IEPs have been fulfilled.</li> </ol> | <p>evaluation was extended to include a larger proportion of newly established provisions, including those for children with severe learning difficulties and for early years. The report will issue by the end of this academic year.</p> <p>The ETI continues to liaise with RQIA on matters where health and social care provision sits alongside educational provision. The joint memorandum of understanding between RQIA and ETI is in the process of being updated. Arrangements have been made for a joint ETI/RQIA professional learning and development day to take place in April 2024.</p> <p>The ETI does inspect schools on their ability to fulfil their duties regarding the preparation and review of Individual Education Plans (IEPs). A thematic evaluation focused on ‘the Statementing Process’ is in train. The purpose of the evaluation is to consider whether the current statementing process meets the needs of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in schools (pre-schools, primary schools, post-primary schools, special schools and EOTAS centres), with particular reference to elements (a) to (c) in Recommendation 15, the practicalities of the statementing process and the implementation and review of the statement. The report is due to be published in June 2024.</p> | <p>NICCY welcomes that liaison with RQIA is undertaken on matters where health and social care provision sits alongside educational provision, and that arrangements have been made for a for a joint ETI/RQIA professional learning and development day to take place in April 2024.</p> <p>Thematic evaluation, which will address 15a, b and c is very welcome. <b>We request sight of report once published.</b></p> |
| <p><b>Strategic Planning for Behavioural Support Services<br/>(Recommendations 16 – 17)</b></p>  |  |  |
| <p><b>Recommendation</b></p>   | <p><b>Action Planned or taken</b></p>  |  |

<sup>2</sup> To be later replaced with Personal Learning Plans through implementation of the new SEN Framework.

<sup>3</sup> Section 2, Children’s Services Cooperation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, available online at [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/niu/2015/10/pdfs/niu\\_20150010\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/niu/2015/10/pdfs/niu_20150010_en.pdf). Also, Article 4 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 (SEND Act)

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| <p>16. An early intervention and preventative approach to behavioral management should be introduced by the DE and implemented by the EA. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. support for parents and families;</li> <li>b. investment in workforce development;</li> <li>c. early access to EA specialist supports; and</li> <li>d. tracking children’s progress against agreed milestones and outcomes.</li> </ul> | <p>The EA Behaviour Plan for 2023/24 (attached) outlines the continuum of support to children and young people, families and schools.</p> <p>Both Primary and Post Primary Behaviour Support Services are 2 of the 8 services, under SEN transformation. Despite the 50% cut in funding for the project, there continues to be a focus on ensuring that from September 2024 we will have in place local multi-service teams in place to better support children and young people.</p> <p>All post primary age young people in NI, have access to the Independent Counselling Service for Schools to support them with a range of needs which may benefit from talking therapy.</p> <p>The Primary Children Looked After Advisory Service is an early intervention, prevention and advocacy provision. The Children Looked After Champion in Education for Northern Ireland leads the provision offering universal, targeted and specialist interventions to meet need. See Service Pathway.</p> | <p>This is welcome.</p> <p>We note that Behaviour Support Services are 2 of the 8 services, under SEN transformation. We are aware that there is significant unmet need in relation to behaviour support services and hope that this can be addressed in a timely manner by the local multi-service teams. <b>We request details of evaluation and monitoring, including in relation to access and tracking children’s progress.</b></p> <p>We welcome that all post primary age pupils have access to the Independent Counselling Service for Schools. We draw attention to the need for parallel provision for primary age pupils.</p> |
| <p>17. A comprehensive range of therapeutic interventions including nurture groups, sensory rooms, and counselling in all primary settings</p>  | <p>Healthy Happy Minds was provided in Primary schools, primary EOTAS and special schools until June 2023 and is currently subject to evaluation which will inform if it continues subject to funding in the future.</p>  | <p>NICCY is very disappointed by the withdrawal of this vital service in primary schools, primary EOTAS and special schools and requests details</p>   |

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| <p>must be made available to children and young people in mainstream settings.</p> | <p>Through Primary Children Looked After Advisory Service, 818 primary education settings created trauma informed spaces, impacting on 1103 primary children looked after. Guidance was also available to support the development of these spaces. See an evaluation/impact report on the trauma informed spaces completed by Trainee Educational Psychologist and Highly Specialist Clinical Psychologist within the Primary Children Looked After Advisory Service.</p> <p>Schools with no Primary Children Looked After registered have been allocated funding and guidance to allow for the establishment of trauma informed spaces on the admission of children.</p> <p>Trauma and attachment whole school awareness online training is available to all schools and a 2-day intensive training is also available to the established School Teams around Children (School Named Contact, Key Adult and Back Up Key Adult), including implementation support at a Whole School and Individual Child Level. (Evaluations are taken and analyzed to inform future practice.</p> <p>In addition, intensive therapeutic support is available to Schools (Level 3) and Children in need (Level 4). Needs are continually reassessed by the Children Looked After Champion every 2 weeks to ensure the right support/resource is prioritised and allocated to meet need.</p> | <p>of timeframe for publishing the evaluation. If a decision is made not to continue the pilot, alternative programmes should be put in place.</p> <p>Creation of trauma informed spaces through the Through Primary Children Looked After Advisory Service is welcome. Trauma and attachment whole school awareness online training and intensive therapeutic support is also welcome.</p> <p>We are also aware that nurture funding was reduced in 2023 and <b>request details of how this has affected provision.</b></p> |
| <p><b>Suspensions and Expulsions (Recommendations 18 – 22)</b></p>                 |  |  |

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| Recommendation  | Action taken or planned  |   |
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| <p>18. Robust data is required to identify the causes of the variance in rates of suspension and expulsion between children with and without SEN.</p> | <p>An updated suspension and expulsion form was issued to schools for the beginning of the 23/24 academic year. As in previous years, the form asks schools to note if a child is on the SEN register and what stage they are at (1 – 3). This will assist in gathering data relating to the number of children with SEN who are subject to suspension.</p> <p>Suspension and expulsion statistics were previously reported as Management Information however work taken forward has enabled the 2020/2021 and 2021/22 pupil suspensions and expulsions data to be classified as Experimental Statistics as the first step to the designation of Official Statistics.</p> <p>EA involved in supporting the DE review of suspensions and expulsions. Management information system is in place for all schools to record suspensions and expulsions with quarterly reporting in place.</p> <p>Under A Fair Start, work is progressing via the EWS on developing restorative practice (RP) training and methodology. A pilot RP service is being developed with a range of schools who have undergone training. Under the Education Welfare Transformation project it is proposed to recruit a number of EWS staff to lead on RP in suspensions and expulsions processes.</p> <p>As part of its ongoing review of the arrangements for the suspension and expulsion of pupils the Department has worked with the EA to ensure more robust data is available on pupil suspensions and expulsions. Suspension and expulsion statistics were reported as Management</p> | <p>The gathering of suspensions and expulsions data, which includes disaggregation by SEN stage, is welcome. <b>We request clarification of whether data relating to the causes of suspension is collected.</b></p> <p>This is welcome.</p> <p>Progress in this area is welcome; <b>we request further details of pilot, including timeframe.</b> We note the proposal to recruit a number of EWS staff to lead on RP in suspensions and expulsions processes and <b>request confirmation that this is in addition to the staff team which we understand (from waiting lists) is currently under resourced.</b></p> |



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|   | <p>Information however work taken forward has enabled the 2020/2021 pupil suspensions and expulsions data to be classified as Experimental Statistics as the first step to the designation of Official Statistics.</p>  | <p>As above, arrangements to ensure more robust suspensions and expulsions data is welcome. We consider that robust data on informal or upregulation exclusions is also required and <b>request confirmation that this is being addressed.</b></p>  |
| <p>19. The <b>DE</b> should undertake an urgent review regarding potentially unlawful informal or unregulated exclusions and issue comprehensive guidance to schools and the <b>EA</b>. This guidance should include formal recording of practices such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. sending children home early from school;</li> <li>b. placing children on reduced school hours outside the statutory framework and guidelines for school exclusion;</li> <li>c. informally excluding children from participation in school activities such as classroom based-activities, school trips, school plays and school photos;</li> <li>d. placing children in isolation or segregating them from peers; and</li> <li>e. where children are ‘managed out</li> </ol> | <p>Following publication of circular in March 2021 the Department has reviewed the arrangements for suspensions and expulsions. The report remains in draft however findings from this review will be considered as part of the ongoing End to end Review of School Improvement under Workstream 8 – Removing Barriers for Children and Young People.</p> | <p>We welcome the review of arrangements for suspensions and expulsions and <b>request that this report is shared with NICCY as we await its publication.</b> As stated in our previous monitoring report, it is vital that work in this area includes data on the use and recording of informal or unregulated exclusions; <b>we request confirmation of same.</b></p> <p>We note the update circular published in 2021 does not refer to the recording of informal exclusion practices. <b>Further details of how this will be addressed are requested.</b></p> |

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| <p>of school’ (told to find another school to avoid expulsion).</p>                                  |   |  |
| <p>20. ETI must include the reviewing of these records as part of the school inspection process.</p> | <p>The ETI does include the reviewing of suspension and expulsion records as part of school inspection and related evaluations. A range of review processes regarding suspension and expulsions records, including informal exclusions, are used in the work of ETI and are dependent on the outcomes of initial analysis of the available qualitative and quantitative data, inspection knowledge through district engagement and the focus of the inspection work. One example of the ETI process adopted is set out in the ETI evaluation (2017) of examination entry policies in schools, available at: <a href="https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/evaluation-effectiveness-examination-entry-practice-and-policy-post-primary-schools">https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/evaluation-effectiveness-examination-entry-practice-and-policy-post-primary-schools</a>. This evaluation identified around 100 year 12 pupils (equivalent to an average year 12 cohort in a post-primary school) being withdrawn from school before the end of the school year, normally with the consent of their parent/carer. Almost all of these pupils had left schooling at the latter stage of the academic year and, therefore, most sat no public examinations. This practice contravenes the legislation governing the education of pupils until they reach compulsory school leaving age.</p> <p>While inspection of primary and post-primary schools remains impacted by action short of strike of the teaching unions, the ETI has liaised with other Inspectorates and other education partners to learn from their work on managing attendance in a post-Covid context. Examples of one Inspectorate’s (Ofsted’s) work include: ‘Off-rolling: Exploring the Issue’ (May 2019) (<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/off-rolling-">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/off-rolling-</a></p> | <p>We note that ETI does reviewing of suspension and expulsion records as part of school inspection and related evaluations. We would welcome <b>further clarity on the range of data</b> that is made available by schools for review by ETI and to conform that this includes 19. a.b. c. d &amp; e.</p> |

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|  | <p><a href="#">exploring-the-issue</a>); ‘Improving School Attendance’ (November 2019) (<a href="https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/16/improving-school-attendance/">https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/16/improving-school-attendance/</a>); and, the Timpson Review of School Exclusion (May 2019) (<a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf</a>). There remains much work to be done on examining the effectiveness of policy and practice on ensuring no child is missing from, and out on, education.</p>   |  |
| <p>21. Boards of Governors must be satisfied that schools have evidenced that all appropriate pastoral measures have been employed before suspension, expulsion or informal exclusion has been considered.</p> | <p>EA services continue to provide guidance to Boards of Governors regarding suspension and expulsion procedures, in accordance with DE Circular 2021/04.</p> <p>ETI does review school data on attendance, suspension, expulsion or informal exclusion as part of the inspection of care and welfare, and safeguarding. ETI also monitors, inspects and reports on the extent to which governors promote high standards of care and welfare and consistently high standards of attendance through being well informed by senior and middle leaders and their own analysis of first-hand evidence (as detailed in the ETI’s Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework for Governance). ETI is willing to meet with NICCY representation to discuss approaches taken. As part of the inspection all relevant records, including minutes of meetings of the boards of governors, form part of the inspection evidence.</p> | <p>This is welcome.</p> <p>While we welcome the clarification provided by the ETI that monitoring, inspection and reporting is undertaken on the extent to which governors promote high standards of care and welfare and consistently high standards of attendance, <b>further detail is needed</b> to ascertain whether the specific focus of our recommendation has been addressed. Further discussion with ETI would be helpful.</p> |
| <p>22. The EA should work constructively with parents/carers to ensure that any children with SEN being educated</p>   | <p>The EA Elective Home Education Team operates within the parameters of the existing EA Guidelines for Elective Home Education, which in turn mirror the current legal</p>   | <p>As noted previously, while we recognise that the EA Elective Home Education Team operates within the</p>  |

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| <p>outside of school, whether stated or not, are provided with the specialist SEN services required. This should include additional support to parents/carers home educating children with SEN.</p>  | <p>landscape in NI. In relation to children with SEN, the team will :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. provide advice when requested</li> <li>2. explore educational causes for concern</li> <li>3. collaborate with colleagues in SARS</li> </ol>  | <p>parameters of the existing EA Guidelines for Elective Home Education, we consider that a proactive approach must be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN who are home educated are met effectively.</p>  |
| <p><b>The Role of the Educational Psychology Service (Recommendations 23 - 25)</b></p>   |  |  |
| <p><b>Recommendation</b></p>   | <p><b>Action taken or planned</b></p>  |  |
| <p>23. The EA must review and systemically revise its existing model for enabling children access to an EP assessment. This should include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. reviewing and replacing the current Time Allocation Model so that the needs of all children suspected to have SEN are assessed at the earliest opportunity; and</li> <li>b. the development of mechanisms to enable schools, EA and DE to record data on unmet need. This should include recording the number of children awaiting referral to the EA Educational Psychology Service for a Stage 3 assessment</li> </ol> | <p>The STP and EA's Educational Psychology Service has finalised its Perceived Need for Educational Psychology (EP) Involvement Study, as part of its Review of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The purpose of the study was to obtain a clearer picture of the number of pupils who schools feel need involvement from EA's EPS, as well as gaining a better understanding of the nature of their needs.</p> <p>By consulting Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in 110 schools (88 primary and 22 post-primary) the authors of the EA study have been able to make the first-ever indicative, evidence-based NI-wide picture of the number of children and young people who may benefit from assessment and/or support from EA's EPS. The findings highlight that during 2021/22, the number of pupils without Statements of SEN who were perceived to need EP involvement, made up 6.4% of the sample primary pupil population and 1.9% of the sample post-primary pupil population.</p> | <p>Completion of the Perceived Need for Educational Psychology (EP) Involvement Study is very welcome. The study's findings in relation to unmet need are informative albeit very concerning. <b>Confirmation of plan to publish is requested.</b></p> <p>We also note the updates provided at Recs 1, 2 &amp; 3 which are of relevance, in particular the introduction of localised teams from Sept '24 which will allow removal of the EPS's current 'gatekeeping' role at Stage 2, with the potential for enhanced access to Stage 2 services. Referrals to EA services will not require EPS assessment and earlier intervention will be supported. We welcome that</p> |

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|   | <p>If these percentages were extrapolated to the total Northern Ireland pupil population, they would suggest that potentially around 11,000 primary and 2,900 post-primary pupils were perceived to need EP involvement during the 2021/22 academic year.</p> <p>The study was approved by EA governance structures and the then SEND Transformation Programme Board in January 2023. EA is keen to publish this report however DE has requested that the study be re-submitted to the new reconstituted Board for approval again. EA intends to bring this study to the next Board meeting in November 2023.</p> <p>The study forms part of the evidence base used in decision making around development of the integrated multidisciplinary model for pupil support, which includes the removal of EPS gatekeeping role at the new Code of Practice Stage 2, which will be introduced in September 2024.</p> <p>See also update on recommendation 1, 2 and 3</p> | <p>once fully implemented this may reduce the number of requests for statutory assessments and therefore reduce waiting times. This is a very positive step; close monitoring of waiting times for services will be vital.</p> |
| <p>24. A more efficient and effective model of Educational Psychology service delivery is required with appropriate levels of investment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. EPs should be assigned to schools on the basis of age and stage;</li> <li>b. EP specialisms should be harnessed and more regular</li> </ul> | <p>The Educational Psychologist Service welcome the review and recognise that it is necessary that they contribute to this process. To that end, they have released four staff to work on the transformation programme for a number of work streams including a review of the Educational Psychology Service and the Pupil Support Services. Their involvement will act as a conduit for the whole Service and</p>   | <p>We welcome that the involvement of EPS staff on the TP and that good practice guidelines which are evidence-based practice have been developed to ensure consistency of practice across the Service.</p>                    |

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| <p>opportunities provided to deliver specialist advice and training of school staff;</p> <p>c. Appropriate levels of professional autonomy for EPs, including to decide to move to Stage 4 or 5 of the Code of Practice without the requirement to exhaust Stages 1 to 3.<sup>4</sup></p> | <p>will ensure cognisance is taken of the views of practicing psychologists.</p> <p>Work has been progressed to ensure that the autonomy of all staff is not compromised while working within the Educational Psychology Service. Good practice guidelines which are evidence-based practice have been developed to ensure consistency of practice across the Service in terms of recommendations. Peer group supervision and individual supervision are built into each EP’s annual work plan to ensure they have an opportunity to ensure high quality practice.</p> <p>Given the emerging continuum of provisions for children and young people with SLD and complex difficulties and support classes for children and young people with learning and social communication needs, guidance documents have been developed to inform Educational Psychologists decision making. As with all documentation within EPS this document will be treated very much as a live document and subject to regular review. This is primarily a document to be used by educational psychologists. The Service are working towards developing a strengths-based approach both in terms of</p> | <p>Progression of this work, including the development of Good practice guidelines is welcome.</p> |
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<sup>4</sup> In preparation for commencement of the new code of practice, the five stage approach to identification, assessment and provision of Special Education Needs (SEN) has been replaced with three stages of special educational provision on the Schools Information Management System (SIMS). Details of the revised stages can be found here: [\\*DE Circular 2021 06 - Three Stages of Special Educational Provision \(fin....pdf \(education-ni.gov.uk\)\)](#). NICCY’s recommendations still apply and will continue to do so when the new SEN Framework is implemented.

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|  | <p>assessment and reporting, which is regarded as best practice.</p> <p>A number of working groups have been established to develop best practice guidance on assessment of SEN; assessment of children with a SLD profile has been prioritised.</p>  | <p>Establishment of working groups is welcome to develop best practice guidance on assessment of SEN. <b>Timeframe for this would is requested.</b></p>   |
| <p>25. The DE and EA must issue a policy that ensures that all children who have, or may have SEN, have equal access to assessment and services regardless of their socio-economic background. Such a policy therefore must address the use of private Educational Psychology and other professional assessment reports.</p> | <p>Work has been progressed to ensure that the autonomy of all staff is not compromised while working within the Educational Psychology Service. Good practice guidelines which are evidence-based practice have been developed to ensure consistency of practice across the Service in terms of recommendations. Peer group supervision and individual supervision are built into each EP’s annual work plan to ensure they have an opportunity to ensure high quality practice. Within the scope of reforming the new Code of Practice Stage 2 services for September 2024, access routes to services and requirements for assessment will be reviewed to ensure full equality of access.</p> <p>The underpinning aim of the revised SEN Framework is that the educational needs of all children with SEN should be addressed, regardless of their socioeconomic background and that the children should be integrated fully and accepted by all on an equal basis into the life of the school.</p> | <p>The development of good practice guideline is welcome. <b>NICCY requests sight of these.</b></p> <p>We also welcome that access routes to services will be reviewed, with a view to ensuring equality. <b>More detail on this process, timeframe etc is requested.</b></p> |
| <p><b>Statutory Assessment and Statementing</b></p>  |   |   |

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| (Recommendations 26 - 27)  |  |  |
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| Recommendation   | Actions taken or planned   |  |
| <p>26. The EA must ensure that its operational processes enable legal compliance with statutory time limits. An action plan to address the delays in the statutory assessment process must be agreed between the health services and EA. Accountability measures must be established and investigative action taken by ETI and RQIA if breaches arise.</p> | <p>Compliance with the 26 week timeline has been impacted by limited specialist placements and staffing deficit linked to imposed financial cuts. A cross directorate team has been in place to support enhanced provision across all schools and progress solutions and schemes of work approved.</p> <p>EA is also working with non statutory providers within the community and voluntary sector and ensuring appropriate governance arrangements are in place alongside DE and ETi.</p> <p>Engagement between EA and relevant Health services in the appropriate and timely provision of HSC advice as part of the Statutory Assessment process across Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Community Paediatrics and Social Work is ongoing and will continue as part of normal engagement also.</p> <p>SEN Co-ordinators and Data Analyst posts within Health Trusts have supported co-ordination and monitoring of Health advices for the Statutory Assessment process. The PHA is working closely with EA to ensure security measures in the roll out of the Anycomms+ system to track submission and receipt of statutory advices. CJSM system continues to operate until full roll out of Any Comms and a quality assurance process has been put in place between EA SEN Office Managers and HSCTs.</p> | <p>The impact of wider factors related to budget cuts is noted. While we acknowledge factors outside of EA’s control, we are very concerned at the persistent delays and that the system will be unable to meet the forthcoming 22-week deadline.</p> <p>We welcome that a cross directorate team has been in place to support enhanced provision across all schools and progress solutions and schemes of work approved.</p> <p>We welcome that engagement between EA and relevant Health services in the appropriate and timely provision of HSC advice as part of the Statutory Assessment process is ongoing. <b>Detail of timeframe involved in the rollout of Anycomms, and how this system interfaces with Encompass, is requested.</b></p> |



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|  | <p>Work continues on the Joint Plan with comments now received from DE and DoH which are being shared with relevant Education and health personnel.</p> <p>Further meetings are arranged to consider the mechanism for populating across organisations in order that both EA and Health can provide the evidence required across the three areas under Statutory Assessment as set out in the draft Code of Practice.</p> <p>Wider discussion with ETI and RQIA on its implementation is being taken forward by DE.</p> <p>There is ongoing engagement between the EA and relevant Health services in the appropriate and timely provision of health services advice as part of the Statutory Assessment process across Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Community Paediatrics and Social Work.</p> <p>Recurrent funding has been provided by DoH to each of the HSCTs for the SEN Co-ordinators and Data Analyst posts who co-ordinate and oversee the HSC input to the Statutory Assessment process.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to establish appropriate security measures for Anycoms+ system in the tracking of HSC submissions and receipt of Statutory advices. In the interim, the secure CJSM system continues to operate with QA processes in place.</p> | <p>While we welcome that progress has been made on development of the Joint plan, outlining how duty on education and health to co-operate in the identification, assessment and provision of services to meet the needs of children who have or may have SEN will be fulfilled, it is disappointing that this is not yet completed.</p> <p>Also addressed by EA - see relevant comment above.</p> <p>This is welcome.</p> <p><b>Projected timeframe in establishing this is requested.</b></p> |
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|  | <p>Following PHA and EA professional specific workshops in June 2022, actions are being consulted on with the relevant professions for feedback in term 1/this quarter. Work continues on the Joint Plan with comments now received from DE and DoH which are being shared with relevant Education and Health personnel. Further meetings are arranged to consider the mechanism for populating across organisations in order that both EA and Health can provide the evidence required across the three areas under Statutory Assessment as set out in the draft Code of Practice.</p> <p>Section 4 of the SEND Act (once commenced) places a duty on education and health to co-operate in the identification, assessment and provision of services to meet the needs of children who have or may have SEN and to prepare a joint plan to show how then intend to fulfil this duty. It also places a duty of ETI and RQIA to inspect that plan at intervals of not more than three years.</p> <p>ETI undertakes inspection and evaluation activity focused on the quality of provision and/or safeguarding; it does not undertake investigations.</p> | <p>See comments above in relation to the Joint Plan.</p> <p>ETI's remit is noted.</p>   |
| <p>27. The EA must establish a more robust and transparent model of quality assurance and decision making at the statutory assessment stage. This must include:</p> <p>a. A review of existing assessment panels to explore the effectiveness, efficiency, and validity of their role in</p> | <p>All children presented within the Statutory Assessment Decision Process are considered based on the information provided by parents, schools and others as appropriate. The decision is solely on whether the child's needs are significant and complex and the school/ setting is reporting that their needs cannot be met within the current available resources. This includes a view of what reasonable adjustments have been implemented, how school has used their provision mapping to meet the child's needs at</p>  | <p>We welcome the detail provided however this does not address the specific requirements of our recommendation which include a review of existing assessment panels; the immediate publication of details about all existing assessment panels; the introduction of a revised model of</p> |

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| <p>informing the route of children and the supports they will receive;</p> <p>b. The immediate publication of details about all existing assessment panels. This should include the terms of reference for each panel, the composition of the panel, frequency of meetings and the criteria used for making decisions. Evidence must be provided to validate the independence of panel members; and</p> <p>c. The introduction of a revised model of quality assuring assessment decisions.</p> | <p>stage 1 and 2 of the Code and where PSS or Health Services have been engaged. Evidence of this is requested when a referral/ request for Statutory Assessment is made.</p> <p>The SADP considers a graduated response to a school making provision for a child with identified SEN. Where there are exceptional circumstances the above may not apply. The overarching trends for declining a statutory assessment are reported within the Service Quarterly Metrics report and more granular data is being worked on to capture specific reasons why referrals do not proceed. Senior staff review all recommendations on a weekly basis and record the final decision. Principal Psychologists also moderate recommendations by EPs to ensure all information on the child is considered and that decisions to request Statutory Assessment are cognisant of the child's current presentation and potential short, medium and long term needs in education. Even with the above governance and quality assurance in place, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal will routinely overturn decisions in favour of proceeding to statutory assessment. This goes against the advice in the Code of Practice which promotes a stepped approach to making provision and reviewing the outcomes. The current review of Pupil Support Services to progress an integrated multi-disciplinary approach to meeting children's needs at stage 2 of the Code of Practice will further support the decision making approach for all stakeholders by building confidence in the system.</p> | <p>quality assuring assessment decisions.</p> <p>We welcome that the current review of Pupil Support Services to progress an integrated multi-disciplinary approach to meeting children's needs at stage 2 of the Code of Practice will further support the decision-making approach for all stakeholders by building confidence in the system.</p> |
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|  | <p>Training and Guidance - this is a year on year plan to ensure all staff and new staff are fully trained and secure in Statutory processes. Service development days are built in to the yearly calendar for all staff.</p> <p>The Educational Monitoring System reports are in operation and a schedule for running the reports for Office Managers is in place. This supports with checking compliance and supports the daily and weekly duties of the SEN Link Officers and management staff. Additional reports have been added recently to support the ratification of statements at Board level.</p>  | <p>Training for staff is welcome.</p> <p>We welcome the monitoring reports that are currently in place, and in particular the introduction of additional reports to support the ratification of statements at Board level.</p>                                   |
| <p><b>Transparency of the SEN Process<br/>(Recommendations 28 – 31)</b></p>  |   |  |
| <p><b>Recommendation</b></p>   | <p><b>Actions taken or planned</b></p>  |  |
| <p>28. Steps must be urgently taken by the EA Board and DE to investigate feedback from Educational Psychologists that their advice is not routinely accepted, and that recommended provisions are not put in place, at the statutory assessment and statementing stage.</p> | <p>All children presented within the Statutory Assessment Decision Process are considered based on the information provided by parents, schools and others as appropriate. The decision to proceed a statutory assessment is based solely on whether the child's needs are significant and complex, and the school/setting is reporting that the child's needs cannot be met within the current available resources. The school should provide evidence they have implemented the graduated approach robustly and appropriately, employing appropriate and sufficient strategies, adjustments and support to teaching, learning, the curriculum and learning environment. The school should demonstrate they have used their provision mapping to meet the child's needs at</p> | <p>Details of governance and quality assurance measures is welcome.</p> <p>We note that recommendation 28 will be further examined as part of the Statementing deep dive in the End to End review of SEN <b>and request sight of findings once complete.</b></p> |

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|   | <p>stage 1 and 2 of the Code and where PSS or Health Services have been engaged. Where there are exceptional circumstances the above may not apply. The overarching trends for declining a statutory assessment are reported within the Service Quarterly Metrics report and more granular data is being worked on to capture specific reasons why referrals do not proceed. Senior staff review all recommendations on a weekly basis and record the final decision. Principal Psychologists also moderate recommendations by EPs to ensure all information on the child is considered and that decisions to request Statutory Assessment are cognisant of the child's current presentation and potential short, medium and long term needs in education. Even with the above governance and quality assurance in place, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal will routinely overturn decisions in favour of proceeding to statutory assessment. This goes against the advice in the Code of Practice which promotes a stepped approach to making provision and reviewing the outcomes.</p> <p>The current review of Pupil Support Services to progress an integrated multi-disciplinary approach to meeting children's needs at stage 2 of the Code of Practice will further support the decision-making approach for all stakeholders by building confidence in the system.</p> <p>This will be examined as part of the Statementing deep dive in the End to End review of SEN.</p> | <p>This is welcome.</p>  |
| <p>29. The EA should immediately adjust its statutory operation processes to ensure compliance with the legal</p> | <p>Final drafts of Health guidance for writing statutory advice are with Health colleagues for comment and feedback will be considered this quarter.</p>  | <p>We note that health guidance for writing statutory advice is currently in</p> |

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| <p>requirement under Article 16 of the Education (NI) Order 1996 to specify special educational provision in Part 3 of statements of special educational need.</p> | <p>Health provision can be either educational or non educational in nature and the EA takes its guidance from case law, the Code of Practice and is working closely with Health (new guidance for writing statutory advice out for comment with Health Therapy services) to ensure Health Provision is in the correct part of the statement.</p> <p>In Bromley London Borough Council v SENT and others the Court of Appeal held that there is "no sharp dichotomy between special educational provision and non-educational provision." The Court of Appeal went on to say, "Rather there is a shared territory of provision which could intelligibly be allocated to either category. That potentially large intermediate area of provision had not been made the subject of any statutory prescription precisely because it was for the LEA, and, if necessary, the tribunal to exercise a case-by-case judgement which could not be anticipated by prescriptive legislation."</p> | <p><b>draft and request confirmation of next steps and related timeframe.</b></p> <p>Steps that will be taken to ensure the health provision is included within the correct part of the Statement are noted.</p>   |
| <p>30. The EA must, as a matter of urgency, publish, review and revise plans in relation to SEN provision, as per its new duty<sup>5</sup> in the SEND Act.</p>    | <p>EA SEND Annual Plan of Arrangements- consultation ran from March 31 to May 26 2023. Site went live on July 31 2023. <a href="https://send.eani.org.uk">https://send.eani.org.uk</a></p> <p>Schools were informed as part of Term 1 Communications and asked to disseminate to parents, children and young people.</p>  | <p>Publication of the annual plan of arrangements is welcome. We <b>request confirmation that the plan includes a clear link to training for staff</b> required for the effective discharge of their functions in relation to special educational provision.</p> |

<sup>5</sup> Article 2 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 (SEND Act)

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|   | DE is working closely with the EA to agree an appropriate time to commence this provision [new SEN Regulations] within the SEN Act.  | NICCY will follow up on commencement of the new SEND Regulations in due course.   |
| 31. The Annual Review process must be evaluated to examine its effectiveness in improving outcomes for children with SEN in mainstream settings. This should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. identify the extent to which the existing process is sufficiently outcomes focused;</li> <li>b. explore the extent of the active involvement of children and parents/carers;</li> <li>c. review the criteria used by the EA when considering whether to maintain, amend, or cease to maintain a statement; and</li> <li>d. assess the adequacy of processes involved in reviewing the effectiveness of existing provision.</li> </ul> | As part of the Statementing Deep dive (within the End to End Review of SEN), the Annual Review process is being explored to ensure that there is an adequate involvement of children and their parents/carers along with the setting of appropriate outcomes.  | NICCY welcomes that both involvement of children and parents/carers, and setting of appropriate outcomes, will be examined as part of the Statementing Deep Dive. <b>We request sight of findings once complete.</b>  |
|   | The EA SEND Implementation Team have rolled-out a significant training programme in relation to the PLP. Some schools are using the PLP however its use cannot be mandated until the provision within the SEND Act is commenced and this requires the new SEN Regulations to be passed by the NI Assembly. | Roll out of the PLP training programme is welcome. Once fully implemented, regular review of PLPs will be crucial given that they will constitute a critical source of evidence, under the revised Code, informing decisions about pupils’ access to the various stages of SEN provision. |
| <b>Communication and Engagement (Recommendations 32 – 33)</b>   |  |   |
| <b>Recommendation</b>   | <b>Action taken or planned</b>   |   |

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| <p>32. The EA must review its policies for communication with parents and carers. Mechanisms must be established to give clarity to the SEN process for children, young people and their families. Therefore, the EA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. should develop user-friendly guidance for children, young people and their parents/carers which explains the various stages of the SEN process; their entitlements at each stage; and guidance on where they can access additional information/support;</li> <li>b. conduct a comprehensive review of community based services for children and young people with SEN, and their parents/carers, and produce a directory to be shared with parents/carers and schools;</li> <li>c. give consideration to the development of a free, accessible and one-to-one service and where each family has a named EA officer who could hear concerns and issues as well as provide individual advice from Stage 1</li> </ol> | <p>Stakeholder engagement was impacted by STP budgetary restrictions in terms of planned practitioner and parent/carer engagement at the end of the 2022/23 academic year. The scale of engagement planned for 2023/24 has also been reduced, but the SEND Transformation team are making full use of its standing stakeholder engagement mechanisms including the Programme Reference Group (which includes parent advocacy groups), Practitioner Forum, Project Advisory Group and Project Board (which includes NICCY representation), along with currently established DE forums and groups.</p> <p>The SEND Transformation team has also completed a baseline survey with stakeholders asking for their views and lived experience of the SEND system to date. The survey received almost 1700 submissions with a strong representation from parents and carers and school staff. The survey report is being finalised and making its way through governance structures. It will be shared with the joint EA/DE Programme Board in November 2023.</p> <p>A number of parent and carer engagement sessions were also held by the SEND Transformation team in November/December 2022, and March and April 2023 with further engagement planned for November 2023 to present the proposed integrated model for the new Code of Practice Stage 2 support. As well as this we have engaged with children and young people with the</p> | <p>While we acknowledge budgetary constraints, reduced engagement is concerning, particularly given the low level of confidence in the system by parents/carers and other Stakeholders. Feedback via our legal complaints service indicates recurring issues with ineffective communications with parents/carers in their navigation of the SEND system. <b>NICCY therefore advises that further action must be taken by to improve communication with parents and carers in relation to the SEN process.</b></p> <p>As stated at rec 2, the baseline survey with stakeholders asking for their views and lived experience of the SEND system to date is welcome. While findings are very concerning we consider this baseline vital for future comparison.</p> <p>Parent and carer engagement sessions in Nov 2022 and spring 2023 is welcome. <b>Confirmation of whether engagement planned for Nov '23 went ahead as planned is requested.</b></p> |
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| <p>to Stage 5 of the current Code of Practice.</p>   | <p>help of EA’s youth service we have received a number of submissions to our baseline survey from children and young people, and plan to engage again to present this new model with assistance from EA’s Youth Service.</p> <p>EA SEND Annual Plan of Arrangements- consultation ran from March 31 to May 26 2023. Site went live on July 31 2023. <a href="https://send.eani.org.uk">https://send.eani.org.uk</a></p> <p>Schools were informed as part of Term 1 Communications and asked to disseminate to parents, children and young people.</p> <p>The Advice and Communication Deep dive (as part of the End to End Review of SEN) is working alongside the EA to ensure that children/young people and their parents/carers are fully informed of any changes to the SEN system.</p> | <p>Engagement with parent/carers and with children and young people through EA’s youth centre is welcome.</p> <p>We consider that ongoing evaluation of effectiveness of actions to improve communication is imperative, with feedback from parents and children integral to that process. Findings of the baseline survey are welcome in this respect.</p>  |
| <p>33. The DE and EA must establish meaningful and robust consultation mechanisms concerning proposed changes in SEN policy or models of service delivery.</p> | <p>As noted in the previous TLTL update, the development of the SEND Transformation Programme plan and business case involved extensive direct engagement with a wide range of stakeholder groups including children and young people, parents/carers, community and voluntary groups, school leaders, trade unions, EA staff and partner agencies. It also led to the establishment of the standing Programme Reference Group (PRG) which includes representation from wider education sector bodies, the health and social care sector, parent representative groups and the wider community and voluntary sector. The PRG has met eleven times since the programme</p>   | <p>As previously noted, NICCY welcomes the range of consultation processes that have been implemented to date. These include engagement with a range of stakeholders (children and young people, parents/carers, community and voluntary groups, school leaders, trade unions, EA staff and partner agencies) and via regular PRG meetings (which includes sectoral, community and parental representation). As work of the SEND TP evolves, it is</p> |

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|  | <p>was first established and has played a critical role in developing the programme plan and business case.</p> <p>The PRG will continue to provide critical input to the programme’s implementation, governance and accountability throughout its lifespan providing a meaningful and robust consultation mechanism at the strategic policy level. An equivalent mechanism will be created at operational level through the project-level stakeholder reference groups which are about to be established.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement was impacted by STP budgetary restrictions in terms of planned practitioner and parent/carer engagement at the end of the 2022/23 academic year. The scale of engagement planned for 2023/24 has also been reduced, but the SEND Transformation team are making full use of its standing stakeholder engagement mechanisms including the Programme Reference Group, Practitioner Forum (comprised of school leaders, teachers and SENCOs), Project Board (Representation includes NICCY, DE, CCMS etc), Project Advisory Group and the internal CYPs Senior Management Working Group, along with currently established DE forums and groups.</p> <p>The SEND Transformation team has also completed a baseline survey with stakeholders asking for their views and lived experience of the SEND system to date. The survey received almost 1700 submissions with a strong representation from parents and carers and school staff. The survey report is being finalised and making its way through governance structures. It will be shared with the joint EA/DE Programme Board in November 2023.</p> | <p>critical that engagement with key stakeholders continues and that their feedback informs the work being taken forward.</p> <p>As noted above, this is disappointing, particularly given the low levels of confidence in the SEND system among key stakeholders.</p> <p>Baseline survey is welcome. <b>Details of next steps is requested.</b></p> |
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|   | <p>A number of parent and carer engagement sessions were also held by the SEND Transformation team in November/December 2022, and March and April 2023 with further engagement planned for November 2023 to present the new proposed integrated model for support. As well as this we have engaged with children and young people with the help of EA’s youth service and plan to engage again to present this new model with assistance from EA’s Youth Service.</p>  | <p>This is welcome. <b>Confirmation is requested</b> on whether further engagement with parents and carers went ahead in November 2023 as planned.</p>  |
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| Recommendation  | Action taken or planned  |   |
| <p>34. In order to ensure that decisions are made in their best interests, children and young people must be placed firmly at the heart of the SEN system. Systems must be developed for engaging children and young people, and their parents and carers, and evaluating the impact of their contribution.</p> <p>a. Guidance should be developed by the EA to support schools to ensure the active involvement of all children and young people in decision making processes.</p> | <p>See responses under 'communication and engagement recommendations'</p> <p>The EA Youth Service has completed the draft pupil voice toolkits for schools through consultation with wider EA support services including SEND, School Development Service, Area Learning Communities and ETI in September 2023.</p> <p>EA Youth Services is currently piloting the resources within school settings to evaluate and finalise the resources in Quarter 3, including any training for staff capacity building that may be required to support successful delivery.</p> <p>The SEND Implementation team provided an overview of the key information and points to consider to Youth</p> | <p>Noted – see comments above.</p> <p>This is welcome – <b>link to the pupil voice toolkit is requested.</b></p> <p><b>Outcome of the pilot is requested,</b> including further detail on its link to DE Circular 2014/14 as well as in relation to staff capacity building training, quality assurance and how that will be addressed.</p> <p>This is welcome.</p> |

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| <p>b. The involvement of intermediaries and advocates should also be explored and their participation considered, particularly where children or young people are reluctant to speak to parents, carers or education professionals.</p> | <p>Services when working with or seeking the views of a child or young person who has or may have SEN.</p>  |  |
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|   | <p>Section 11 of the SEND Act once commenced, will allow children over compulsory school age with SEN, to make decisions and exercise new rights that would normally have been undertaken by a parent, providing they have capacity to do so.</p> | <p>As stated previously, we welcome this provision and consider it essential that determination of capacity is reviewed on a regular basis. In the case of a child who is determined to lack capacity, NICCY it is vital that the Regulations retain the facility for appointment of an alternative person or advocate to protect/support the autonomy of the child.</p> |
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| Recommendation  | Action taken or planned   |  |
| <p>35. Article 4 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 (SEND Act) must be enacted immediately.</p>  | <p>DE, EA and Health continue to work on the joint plan.</p>  | <p>As stated above, we welcome that some progress has been made on development of the Joint plan, it is disappointing that this is not yet completed.</p>  |

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| <p>36. The DE, EA, the Department of Health (DoH), the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Public Health Agency (PHA) must review and revise arrangements for the planning, assessment, diagnosis and implementation of supports/services to ensure that key services work collaboratively. This should include the establishment of:</p> <p>a. localised, specialised, multi-disciplinary teams across Northern Ireland. These teams should have a clear remit for cross-consultation, assessment and provision of advice and support for children with SEN in mainstream schools;</p> <p>b. protocols for the joint planning, assessment, diagnosis and implementation of supports/services. These must be informed by the staff and professionals working across the agencies involved; and</p> <p>c. fora across Northern Ireland, which involve statutory education and health &amp; social care agencies and VCS organisations to develop local</p> | <p>Extensive collaborative <del>led by DE</del> across education and health sectors and beyond, continues. This includes <u>the development of</u> multi-disciplinary operating models in terms of sensory screening and co-ordinated service delivery, medical needs and early years service planning.</p> <p>In order to capture, monitor and optimise the scale and nature of such collaboration, the DE/DoH SEN Steering Group has initiated a review of multidisciplinary working in partnership with a newly established sub-group of the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership (CYPSP).</p> <p>The draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Departments of Education and Health has recently been approved by health colleagues.</p> <p><u>The PHA hosted a health/education workshop In June 2023 to further develop integrated working across these sectors to support CYP in Special Schools. A number of initiatives have been agreed from this workshop that includes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>An integrated training programme;</u></li> <li><u>Consistency of language and information; and</u></li> <li><u>Analysis of data and trends across the health and education sector</u></li> </ul> <p><u>The jointly funded DoH/DE VCYP Partnership lead post has been appointed within the PHA on 2/10/22 to engage with and connect cross-sectoral stakeholders, including children, young people and parents, to improve collaborative working at a local</u></p> | <p>NICCY welcomes the extensive collaborative led by DE across education and health sectors and beyond. We positively note that the review of MD working, initiated by the DE/DoH SEN Steering Group, along with a newly established sub-group of the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership (CYPSP).</p> <p>Approval of MoU between Health and Education is welcome.</p> <p>We welcome the additional progress detailed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An aligned offer for children with SEND in Early Years which has included closer collaboration between EA Support Services and RISE NI;</li> <li>- Work on training opportunities for both Early Years professionals and parents/carers has allowed the creation of an easily accessible and streamlined menu of training;</li> <li>- Establishment of the Early Years Interface Group which has been established and includes</li> </ul> |
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Commented [RE1]: Additions from DoH

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| <p>relationships and exchange knowledge. Consideration should be given to a facilitative role for the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) through its Outcomes and Locality Planning Groups.</p> | <p><u>and regional level to improve outcomes for Children with SEND.</u></p> <p><u>A number of networks have been established between DoH/DE/EA/PHA to better facilitate the planning and delivery of services.</u></p> <p><u>This process is both building on existing interfaces between Education and Health and leading the development of new innovative partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. This initiative has led to the development of a Hub and Spoke Model with 7 Special Schools across the region to help develop and embed a culture of joint working and co-production across Health and Education at a strategic and operational level.</u></p> <p><u>A working group was established by CYPSP and there continues to be close working with PHA/HSCT’s in responding to the increased enrolment numbers for Special Schools; as well as supporting PHA in the development of RISE NI to key stage 2 (multidisciplinary, interagency service).</u></p> <p>EA Early Years Services have led in creating an aligned offer for children with SEND in Early Years which has</p> | <p>representation from CYPS, Education Directorate, PHA &amp; RiseNI;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- complete Train the Trainer training on the Solihull Approach, facilitated by SHSCT by some EA staff.</li> </ul> |
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|  | <p>included closer collaboration between EA Support Services and RISE NI. Work on training opportunities for both Early Years professionals and parents/carers has allowed the creation of an easily accessible and streamlined menu of training which includes both EA and RISE NI material. Further work to strengthen this collaboration is ongoing through the Early Years Interface Group which has been established and includes representation from CYPS, Education Directorate, PHA &amp; RiseNI. Some EA staff have also had the opportunity to complete Train the Trainer training on the Solihull Approach, facilitated by SHSCT.</p> |  |
| <p><b>DARS and Appeals<br/>(Recommendations 37 – 39)</b></p>   |  |  |
| <p><b>Recommendation</b></p>   | <p><b>Action taken or planned</b></p>  |  |
| <p>37.The EA must ensure that the opportunity to resolve disputes as early as possible is made available to parents/carers.<br/>a. Information should be produced to raise parents/carers’ awareness of the Dispute Avoidance Resolution Service (DARS).</p> | <p>The SEN Advice and Information Service has provided information engagement sessions for parents and the DARS service has been promoted at these sessions also. Further sessions for parents are also planned.</p>   | <p><b>Details of further sessions with parents is requested including timeframe for these.</b> SAIS engagement sessions are welcome.</p> |

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| <p>b. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the new mediation mechanism should be conducted in order to engender confidence in the process and encourage other individuals to participate.</p> |   |  |
| <p>38. An action plan should be prepared by the EA outlining the steps which will be taken to reduce the number of appeals to SENDIST.</p>   | <p>A diagnostic review of SENDIST trends and drivers was completed by the EA at the end of 2022. It was taken through internal governance structures and approved by the SEND Transformation Programme Board in February, 2023. Upon submitting the communications and engagement plan to DE for the release of the review, it was requested that it be brought to the re-constituted DE and EA Programme Board for approval again. Before this, DE reviewed the report again and made a number of requests for amendments and additions. This is currently being considered and addressed by EA and the review will be presented for approval again.</p> | <p>The delay in publishing the diagnostic review of SENDIST trends, is disappointing. <b>We request confirmation of expected date of publication.</b></p>  |
| <p>39. The Department of Justice (DoJ) must provide legal aid to support parents/carers’ requests for appeal at SENDIST.</p>   | <p>No change from last update.</p>  | <p>As stated previously, while we note the situation in respect of legal aid, we consider it unacceptable that all parents who need it cannot receive appropriate support for appeal at SENDIST.</p> |
| <p><b>Systemic Review (Recommendation 40)</b></p>  |   |  |
| <p><b>Recommendation</b></p>   | <p><b>Action taken or planned</b></p>   |  |



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| <p>40. The Terms of Reference for the ‘external, independent review of education provision’<sup>6</sup> must include the structure and effectiveness of the EA in meeting the needs of children with SEN and disability.</p> | <p>EA Landscape Review Oversight Group has now been established to address the recommendations from the report. The End to End Review of SEN is part of this work.</p> <p>The external independent review of SEN service provision was published on 23 May 2023. Following this, work commenced to map the recommendations against ongoing work across EA and DE.</p> | <p>We welcome that EA Landscape Review Oversight Group has now been established, and that the End to End Review is part of this work. Monitoring of this will be ongoing.</p> <p>This is welcome.</p> <p>We also welcome the recent publication of the Independent Review of Education and recommendations relevant to SEN, including in relation to investment in education (Rec 10), transformation of SEN support (Rec 11) and facilitation of learner centred interventions (Rec 14).</p> |
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<sup>6</sup> [Departments comment on the publication of the Independent Review of Education | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/departments-comment-on-the-publication-of-the-independent-review-of-education)