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THE NATIONAL SEND FORUM Minutes 13th May 2020 Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present: David Bateson OBE (DB) *Chair*, Lorraine Petersen OBE (LP) *FLSE*, Carolyn Morgan (CM) *FLSE*, Rona Tutt OBE (RT) *NAHT*, Steve Cullingford-Agnew (SC-A) *Equals*, Caroline Wright (CW) *RCSLT*, Kiran Hingorani (KH) *SWALSS/NASS*, Stephen Deadman (SD) *NAHE*, Michelle Haywood (MH) *WMSEND*, Penny Barratt (PB) *SSV*, Lucy Atherton (LA) *IPSEA*, Carol Kelsey (CK) *NNPCF*, , Rob Williams (RW) *NAHT*, Richard Boyle (RB) *engage*, Adam Boddison (AB) *nasen*, Chris Rollings (CR) *FLSE*, Malcolm Reeve (MR) *WSS*, Melanie Foster (MF) *NAS*, Julie Walker (JW) *sen.se*, Brendan Heneghan OBE (BH) *Engage*, Kate Williams (KW) *NASS*, Caroline Wright (CW) *RCSLT*, Catherine Ollington (CO) *NSN*, David Canning (DC) *BATOD/NATSIP*, Kim Taylor (KT) *FLSE*,

Guests: André Imich (AI) *DfE* present for final 30 minutes of meeting

Minutes: Andy Petersen (AP)

1. Welcome and Introductions

DB welcomed and thanked everyone for joining this virtual meeting

**For
Action**

2. Protocol for meeting

DB went through some protocols for this virtual meeting

3. Apologies

PDnet, Browne Jacobson

4. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were agreed – Thanks to Michelle Hayward for doing these so well.

5. COVID – 19: SEND reference group briefing – AB to lead

AB explained Government had been issuing blanket guidance which had focussed on 'vulnerable' pupils. This guidance was not necessarily appropriate to all parts of our specialist sector. As a result the SEND Reference Group had been set-up to help with the messaging and to comment on guidance before it was issued. AB felt that government was doing its best to ensure that they were 'doing the right thing'.

The group had met 3 times so far. Example of where it had had an impact included use of the terms 'clinically vulnerable' and 'very clinically vulnerable'. The group was also considering financial vulnerability, PPE and testing and it's applicability to different parts of the sector.

The group usually meets every 2 weeks with several representatives from the DfE (typically 5 or 6) so as to ensure coverage across all areas of responsibility. AB was interested to hear views from the forum in terms of guidance, or policy or direction of travel (particularly around COVID-19) that he could feed back to the reference group.

RW commented his members felt that the guidance was not always appropriate to, and demonstrated a lack of understanding of, many of their areas. For example residential settings, meeting needs etc. There were also issues around transport that sometimes affect special schools, particularly those that take pupils from more than one local authority.

Members were also concerned about the scientific background to guidance given. Members lacked confidence in the guidance given for the next big step to reopen or widen the opening of schools. Guidance did not seem to be addressing many of the issues that were arising, in particular PPE in special schools.

CK stated that NNPCF actually had representatives on the group but was finding that parents did not always understand the guidelines and so NNPCF had to rewrite them, which was not always easy since they were not downloadable. Parental confidence was also an issue for NNPCF.

LA commented that the focus of the guidelines seemed to be on those pupils with EHCPs, who are a minority, rather than pupils on SEN support who were the majority but were missing out on additional help.

CR commented that the issue of risk assessment was key, particularly in the areas of PPE, social distancing, SEMH etc.

KT agreed with AB that it was important to establish a dialogue with the DfE. She felt that there was some friction between the issues raised by practitioners and the guidelines. KT observed that DfE were trying to address some of the issues through frequently asked questions (FAQs). It was thought that the best approach was to have a risk assessment that the whole country could use. KT also thought that the more she looked at the guidance, the clearer some of the practicalities were becoming.

AB commented that the group had considered publishing advice to clarify issues raised, but had not proceeded due to issues of legal liability and general expertise in producing such documents. So the use of FAQs had presented itself as the best solution to this problem. In AB's opinion there was a

real dichotomy between the desire for guidance in all settings and the stated desire of heads and school leaders to have decision-making autonomy. This had resulted in a tension which the DfE had addressed by preparing a framework within which heads could make their own decisions – this had led to the perception that the guidelines were ‘woolly’. AB felt that the department was listening but was trying to navigate a challenging set of circumstances.

RB commented that school leaders needed to be empowered to make the right decisions to keep children and staff safe.

KT responded that she had emphasised that heads had a unique skill set to enable them to make such decisions. However some heads had been put under a lot of pressure by local authorities.

CM commented that heads had a difficult problem in assessing the levels of risks that were acceptable in potentially life threatening decisions. She felt that the government was wrong to talk about social distancing in the school setting because this was not really possible. In the end she felt it came down to a ‘gut feeling’ about the safety of staff and young children regardless of timescales that were being dictated externally.

MR commented that all that could be expected from the DfE was a level of interpretation and an understanding that there are groups of children with special educational needs and the guidelines will impact on them differently. His judgement was that DfE had approached the meetings of the group in a proactive and supportive way and that they appreciated the need for nuance towards children with SEND. MR also commented on the legal position surrounding the delivery of EHCPs. Whilst the legal responsibility still rested with the local authority it was important that stakeholders appreciated that there needed to be a partnership between Heads, local authorities and parents/families.

CK commented that a child with SEN support in one authority could have an EHCP in another. This meant that the EHCPs were not necessarily an accurate measure of a child’s complex needs since this varied between authorities. In CKs opinion the government was best placed to assess transmission rates and group risks and to communicate these to schools and parents so that they could make informed decisions. CK would like to know not only the short term solutions but also the medium and long term plans. For some children and families life will never be the same again and this could lead to increased need for social care support in the future.

KT advised that children who had SEN support requirements could still attend school. If the school felt they were vulnerable or at risk they should be being encouraged to go into school. Provision was also available by online platforms so it was probable that education is being offered in a blend of formats and will continue into the future as some pupils will require shielding for much longer than others. Headteachers just want to know that it is safe to have children back in school. Her personal approach is looking at percentages – currently got 10% of her pupils in so what do I need to do to bring 15%, 20%, 25%, etc.? Headteachers needed to interpret the guidance for their children and school setting at a local level and plan the way forward in order to bring all the different cohorts into a normally operating school.

AB responded that there was work going on about actively supporting pupils on SEN Support. There is guidance due to be published for the more specialist end of the sector - PPE/risk assessment/testing – however there was a time delay on things coming out of Government because everything was having to go through the Cabinet Office before publication

LA asked for clarification around the point in the guidance that stated that as much as possible everyone should keep the 2m distance but staff should be aware that in a specialist setting this may not be possible. However PPE would only be necessary if it was required pre-pandemic.

AB responded that this was correct but headteachers needed to minimise risk as much as possible.

CW said that RCLT were in discussions with DfE about external staff and whether they should be going into school or continuing to work remotely.

AB responded that the DfE were looking at this and will be issuing guidance.

KT wanted to share a model that was operating in New Zealand and Australia. It was the concept of 'bubbles' – small groups of children and a core group of staff who work together all the time. This minimises cross contamination.

AB – PPE should not be based on who you work for but the function of the task that you are undertaking. Also there was a need to consider the traumatic effect that extensive use of PPE may have on a pupil.

CR – agreed that the task should be the lead in terms of PPE. He felt that schools need a little more guidance around things like physical intervention – If a child dis-regulates and requires physical intervention should there be a risk assessment of the intervention or should that pupil not be taken back into school.

DB had been thinking about the current situation from a macro level.

Looking at current statistics:

97% of patients had an underlying health condition.

89% were over the age of 65 and the impact of the virus decreased rapidly with age.

DB felt that we should be looking at the kind of risks we would need to think about if the virus persists and measure risk in perspective, after all there was more chance of the school catching fire than a child dying from the virus and staff would be most likely more in danger from one another than from children. However differential rates of concern will lead to differential rate of getting children back into school.

CR responded by saying that the issue was less about the worry about the children and more about concerns for staff – there was an ageing population in school – thus it was difficult to persuade staff that school is a safe space especially when guidance about PPE is not supportive.

CR also raised the issue that some staff and pupils had received shielding letters but there appeared to be a postcode lottery especially for children. Of those who had had letters their shielding time

would come to an end in June. There was a need to know what is going to happen so schools can plan staffing etc.

CK – Wanted to share with those headteachers who are working closely with their LA about the importance of how they communicate with families which was very variable across the country. She liked the idea of ‘bubbles’ as she felt this was something that parents would understand. She felt there would be families that will not want to send their child back to school either because it is not the right thing to do at the moment or because of fear. Thus high quality communication and consistency of the facts is key.

CK felt that it was not good enough to just send a letter home but schools needed people who could talk it through with families and also use alternative communication methods to ensure all needs are met.

6. **Resilience planning for future crises (JH)** this item had been requested by JH – unfortunately she was not at the meeting so this item was deferred.

7. **Policy and DfE Update**

DB welcomed AI to the meeting and briefly went over the things that had been discussed this morning. DB asked AI to raise any issues and information from DfE. AI congratulated everyone on keeping up to date with everything coming from DfE. AI was opening this session up to the group to discuss any issues arising from this morning.

RT – Queried progress on Mental Health Trailblazers and the SEND Review that had started pre-COVID-19.

AI replied that every piece of Government work had been slowed down by COVID–19 - the Mental Health Trailblazers were very much in place but working to a new time-frame and currently developing materials to support COVID-19. The SEND Review had slowed down but it has not been stopped and very much part of the way forward.

KT stated that trying to understand the guidance has been difficult especially for new headteachers. She asked about additional guidance for special schools setting.

AI replied that there is more guidance about vulnerable children widely and special schools will be part of this – he anticipated that it would be available in the next 10–12 days.

KT asked for more specific information in relation to developing confidence for parents, pupils and staff to be safe in school – they required more information about the scientific evidence – KT believes that headteachers should determine these things locally but more specific information where children will not be able to social distance would be really helpful. She was concerned about legal challenge from HSE or parents. There needed to be a rationale as to why we are making decisions.

AI responded that if DfE had given too strict guidance to special schools then there would have been an outcry of 'you don't know my school' etc. As much as possible it has been left to special schools to make their own road-map, co-produced with the LA and others. The work of special schools is complex so it was difficult to create guidance for each individual school. DfE had tried to give heads the opportunity to form their own plan based on their knowledge of the community in which they work.

CR stated that there was an issue about managing the anxiety of staff – heads had risk-assessed pupils but staff are worried because they are hearing media messages about PPE, social distancing etc.

AI felt that this was a very valid point – there was fragility in the system at the moment but as more schools open and more children go back so confidence will be increased.

DB commented that he had not seen anything from other countries about children with SEND. We seemed to know a great deal about adults but we could put this into perspective if we had data.

MR endorsed what had been said – not being too specific is the correct way to go – DfE had got the balance just right – schools needed principles that could inform a headteacher's thinking so that it could be shared with parents and families.

AI commented that DfE had not issued many directives There was a framework on which to build.

KT – would like to see a little more information – If DfE want schools to be working in co-production then this should be stated in the guidance – Headteachers can make these decisions but some are struggling with their LA relationship, support and guidance (or not as the case may be). She felt that the other thing we need to think about is not more guidance but a rationale that will support headteacher decisions.

LA queried the impact of the Coronavirus Act – this gave a wider range of powers that the SOS could have used. One of those is the disapplication of the criminal penalty for not sending child to school. She queried if a parent of a priority group child chooses not to send child to school could they be prosecuted?

AI replied that sending your child into school even if they are in a priority group is still optional - no one will be prosecuted for non - attendance in June and July – however this might change in September.

KW queried about transitions – messaging going to LAs – some schools and LAs have good relationships but others don't – Is messaging consistent?

AI – In guidance to LA and training that we have given we have mentioned the transition groups and made it clear that all transitions reviews must have been completed by 31st March.

8. Thought Leadership Paper on Zero Tolerance Behaviour Policies

The draft paper had been circulated – DB asked LA to lead this discussion. Lucy acknowledged that RB had written most of the document. The area that had not been written yet was the impact of zero tolerance policies. LA asked if anyone had any case studies on this particular aspects or how it worked in practice.

ALL

RB felt that it was an unfinished issue – there was very little data on impact – relevant questions had not been asked – In England there was anecdotal evidence from settings where it had worked. Most of data and information came from America. However it was difficult to compare mainstream with Alternative Provision –there were problems around rights issues, discrimination and the exclusion of certain groups of students. Papers that RB had found indicated that it did not work. A very big concept that is undefined and contextual – could not find anyone in specialist settings that uses it. In mainstream there was also anecdotal evidence and different ways of doing it which meant that there was no national picture. He suggested that what could be done was to look at all the ways that young people can be managed without having to use zero tolerance. There were lots of excellent examples to share with mainstream schools.

RW questioned why schools had chosen to go down the road of zero tolerance? There were mixed messages from schools, parents, pupils, and staff. Zero tolerance in America had very much developed from a criminal background (gun crime).

CK questioned whether families have picked up the discrimination element of zero tolerance – a student with Tourettes shouting out in a corridor would be disciplined or a child in a wheelchair who does not stand up when a teacher comes into the room. What is the purpose of education? ‘All children learn to just do as they are told and that certain groups of children are not tolerated.’

RB imagined that any mainstream school that has children with specific needs would not have a zero tolerance policies. If anyone was aware of schools/LAs who are using Zero Tolerance please let RB know.

ALL

DB suggested that putting a specific example as outlined by CK into the paper would be useful as would an indication as to what it does in terms of preparation for adulthood.

MR commented that the notion of zero tolerance is abhorrent. He felt it had grown out of the increase of academies where academy groups took over a school and setting out a set of measures to bring about change in behaviour and culture of school. There was a slightly ‘machismo’ approach to headship – excluding large number of pupils on the first day for not wearing the right shoes gets the headline ‘The toughest head in Britain’.

There should be zero tolerance around drugs, guns etc. but what we see is lack of tolerance especially for SEND children. Thus there were situations where a child gets excluded or getting sanctions because of their SEND. This was led by ignorance and SLT not understanding the needs of the pupils and applying behaviour policy without recognising the needs of child.

KT commented that the Zero tolerance model had become a ‘consequence’ model – punishments as a result of a list of misdemeanours which move you up a list and lead to eventual exclusion.

PB commented that a statement about PBS had been added – however this should not sit on its own so maybe we should add a couple of other systems that are being used in schools.

RB questioned what were the alternatives to zero tolerance – relationships between staff and pupils are key – EEF have produced some good alternatives and this group could do the same.

SD stated that we see anxiety that builds up when they cannot get into school – working with schools we try and get schools understand about the background of each individual – staff then modify the way they act towards each pupil. SLT and SENCOs need to share information with all staff.

DB commented that sometimes what was difficult was to get staff to understand that to be fair you can treat children differently – ‘that’s not fair because they are getting away with it’ and that staff development was key.

DB thanked everyone for attending today and thanked MH for doing the minutes for the last meeting.

Meeting Closed at 12.28 p.m.

THE NATIONAL SEND FORUM Minutes 20th May 2020
Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present: David Bateson OBE (DB) *Chair*, Lorraine Petersen OBE (LP) *FLSE*, Carolyn Morgan (CM) *FLSE*, Rona Tutt OBE (RT) *NAHT*, Caroline Wright (CW) *RCSLT*, Kiran Hingorani (KH) *SWALSS/NASS*, Stephen Deadman (SD) *NAHE*, Michelle Haywood (MH) *WMSEND*, Penny Barratt (PB) *SSV*, Carol Kelsey (CK) *NNPCF*, , Rob Williams (RW) *NAHT*, Richard Boyle (RB) *engage*, Adam Boddison (AB) *nasen*, Chris Rollings (CR) *FLSE*, Melanie Foster (MF) *NAS*, Julie Walker (JW) *sen.se*, Brendan Heneghan OBE (BH) *Engage*, Clare Dorer (CD) *NASS*, Caroline Wright (CW) *RCSLT*, Catherine Ollington (CO) *NSN*, David Canning (DC) *BATOD/NATSIP*, Kim Taylor (KT) *FLSE*, Jane Carter (CD) *PDnet*

Guests: Rebekah Edgar (RE) Linh HY (LH) joined the meeting at 11.15am

Minutes: Andy Petersen (AP)

The meeting resumed at agenda item 9

9. Dates for 2020-21 7th Oct 9th Dec 3rd Feb 31 Mar 26th May 7th July

10 Regional Centres of Excellence Update on research proposal (RT/CD/MR)

RT presented a paper titled “Update on Regional Centres of Expertise” that had been previously circulated. RT acknowledged that it had been a while since this item was first introduced and a working party established to look at it. The paper outlines the recent events within the SEND world

and how now would be the perfect time to further this concept. RT also talked about how RCEs would fit into current regional structures and the problems that RCEs might address. She then discussed how this would work in practice suggesting that the 'hub and spoke' model might be appropriate.

KT commented that she would like to see some discussion on who will be the 'hubs'. She felt that other organisations should be allowed to apply as well as TSAs. RT felt that this was a good point.

CD spoke about the next steps – data needed to be gathered about what is out there, what people see as regional work, what's getting in the way of people working regionally CD agreed with KT that there have been various mechanisms set up, which ought to look something like a regional centre of expertise but they were not delivering what we would expect. The plan is to send out a Survey Monkey to gather evidence from settings as soon as possible. CD also felt that this was an excellent time to be selling the idea that regional working is a solution to some of the problems There were lots of stories and anecdotal evidence but we needed data to build on. With the SEND Review underway it would be good to get a think piece to DfE to feed into that but time-scales may not allow for this.

RW commented that NAHT had recently undertaken a school improvement commission which was yet to be published. This looked at regional work and picked up a lot of points that have been talked about here. RW was happy to share this with the RCE working group.

KT commented that special schools that were also teaching schools have set up a group with this in mind – they were doing some significant pieces of work but they don't get onto groups that might have significant impact.

DB reminded the group that we have £20,000 and he would like to move forward on this and pay for some research as soon as possible. He asked RT or CD what the next steps are.

CD said that the questionnaire was the first thing – we can design the questionnaire and get it circulated but need funding for someone to crunch the numbers.

DC (chat) – We should also not forget the role of the LA - some LAs have a regional SEND group

KH commented that SWALSS was very keen to support this project and very happy to do that in the South West region

KT commented that FLSE in East would be happy to help – there was also representation in North East and Midlands.

RT requested any links or information that members may have.

CD agreed that the Working group would sort out the questions and will circulate them to the group but it would be helpful if there were not too many comments as we need to get this up and running as soon as possible.

DB saw this as a very inclusive project that all of the group could contribute to and thanked Rona and the group for getting this off the ground.

DB then re-introduced the topic of Zero tolerance from last week and asked RB if he had had any feed-back.

RB – The contact DC had given him the previous week (Gary Lewis) was going to get back to him. Lucy has sent an updated version of the last presentation that was given to the group who were going to have a Zoom meeting to discuss the next steps – anyone who had any evidence or information should please send to RM or LA. Zero Tolerance appeared to be a short term solution in mainstream schools. The final paper could support the RCE group and the work they are doing.

All

11. The Engagement Model

DB introduced Linh Hy and Rebecca Edgar from the Standards and Testing Agency (STA).

A presentation about the Engagement Model had been circulated prior to the meeting.

LH & RE made their presentation, introduced the Standards and Testing Agency and gave a brief overview of the Rochford Review. They then talked through the Engagement Model, the training that had already taken place and finally the impact that COVID-19 had had on the roll-out process.

DB thanked LH and RE and asked for questions.

CK commented that she was not familiar with the topic but wondered what material there will be for parents, many of whom were very familiar with P Scales but would not know about this new model.

LH replied that the agency was in the process of developing leaflets for parents to be distributed once they knew when implementation was going to take place. The agency hoped that schools were also talking to parents about the changes as well.

KT wanted to share that many special schools had already adopted the Engagement Model and stopped using P Scales so to ask schools to report P Scales for a further year would not be helpful. Whatever the decision about their implementation, Ofsted need to be aware as schools are concerned about accountability measures. She was also concerned about the training as some of the trainers may not have SEND expertise. Would be helpful if next year was a transition year.

LL replied that they had had conversations with Nick Whittaker from Ofsted and have arranged training for Inspectors. This will form part of the Quality of Education judgement.

PB was concerned that there was the lack of clarity around who was identified as needing the Engagement Model. Under the pilot there appeared to be a lack of consistency across schools. It

appeared that some schools were using the model for pupils who may not necessarily need it. Mainstream schools using them for pupils who should not be on them.

CR commented that when rolling out the training it would be helpful if there was an opportunity to also look at curriculum. There was still no guidance about what curriculum should look like for this group of pupils. There was also a need to clarify the language. There should be outcomes not targets as EHCPs are looking for outcomes.

KT commented that there was a need to consider that many children who are using Engagement are shielded children and we are not sure when they will be back in school. Therefore the model is not currently being used at home as it is not easy to replicate it.

11.50 SD left the meeting

RW queried when the agency is going to be able to share the final decision about implementation?

RE replied that Ministers were currently trying to make decisions as well as all of the additional work connected with COVID-19. She thought that it would be June when the announcement was made.

KT commented that many special schools were already following the guidance so to have to go back to P Scales would be difficult so any form of transition would be welcome.

DB thanked LH and RE for their presentation and listening to the views of the members of the group.

11.55 AB joined the meeting

DB asked the group about the July meeting/s – assuming that the meeting will have to remain virtual. The group agreed on **1st and 8th July** following the same format as this meeting.

DB asked AB to update from the SEND Reference Group (their next meeting was later that day)

AB responded that high on agenda was the phased wider opening of schools. The DfE was working on additional guidance for special schools and this should be published within a week. On the agenda were also the summer holidays and what the expectation was for opening throughout the summer. Also the financial impact on special schools – workforce ratio, PPE etc. Finally there was a need to discuss school transport. Schools were ready and confident but transport staff may not be available.

JC stated that there were issues about shielded children. In JC's authority 800 + pupils who are on the shielded list but schools do not have access to this list so unless parents tell them they do not know who they are. The LA was not able to share this NHS information with schools.

AB commented that safeguarding should trump GDPR. There was a need to think about what will happen if that information was not shared.

JC mentioned the "No Isolation" Pilot – <https://www.noisolation.com/uk/>

KT (on chat) commented that LAs are still collating information from national NHS database. Although we find out from parents – no other way of finding out.

CM commented (on chat) that they are planning slow, cautious approach to ensure confidence of staff and families. Not looking at significant increases in numbers due to transport availability, staff availability and parental reticence.

DC commented (on chat) – that transport was working while numbers are small, but if numbers increased the need for social distancing will cause serious transport issues.

12. Updates from members

BATOD/NatSIP – Unfortunately DC was unable to be heard but he sent information as follows:

- Direct use of technology, Teams and WhatsApp in particular, have allowed direct work to continue. Anecdotal reports are that these are developing into very effective ways of working with children and their families. Children with EHCPs and on SEN support are benefiting from this direct work which is usually conducted in collaboration with the host mainstream schools, or directly delivered by teachers in special schools.
- Anecdotal evidence again, suggests that this challenging time has created opportunities to work more closely with families than hitherto. This is a highly desirable and positive outcome.
- Deaf Awareness Week has demonstrated the potential of the internet providing a great medium for promoting Sign Language and there are many free online BSL courses being run including the National Deaf Children’s Society offer
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCi6DvQHbWiFqcQuNabqMO6w>.

PDnet – There was a virtual TEAMS meeting on the 21st May for all PD Leads to discuss returning to school – focused on solutions.

DB asked if JC had seen any evidence from other countries around children with medical needs returning to school – JC commented that she had not seen anything.

NNPCF – All representatives are working remotely but also having to look after their own children so what was being done will depend on family commitments.

FLSE (KT) – FLSE East had a meeting last Friday. She thanked LP for the newsletters that she had been circulating to members which were really helpful.

CR also thanked Lorraine for the updates. It is not the children that are causing the most concern but staff safety (PPE) and well-being. Special schools were really good at sharing risk assessments and support for each other.

LP was happy to send the news updates to any NSEND Forum members. Members should advise her if they required this.

NAS – MF sent the following information to be included in the minutes.

Current key concerns are around the following issues outlined in their submission this month to the House of Commons Education Select Committee, which is carrying out an inquiry right now into the impact of Covid-19 on education and children's services, with a particular focus on vulnerable children:

- Temporary downgrading of LAs' duty to implement children's EHCPs to 'reasonable endeavours' - we are asking for this duty to be restored, as we know some children are receiving very little provision and we are concerned about the long-term impact this will have
- Lack of support for children who receive SEND Support in school but who do not have an EHCP
- How social distancing can work in special schools
- Access to PPE in schools
- Preparation for a general return to school and the particular needs of autistic pupils

Additional information:

NAS have a coronavirus hub on their website that includes a summary of the current legal position <https://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/media-centre/news/2020-05-15-changes-to-send-law.aspx>

The support NAS offer to parents is via our Education Rights Service. ERS advisers are available to answer questions from parents and families on any aspect of educational provision. The number of enquiries to the service has fallen during the coronavirus outbreak, although will likely rise as the return to school begins.

We are talking to the Autism Education Trust about how their resources can be made widely available to schools to help make the process of returning to school as smooth as possible for autistic pupils.

We continue to work with other organisations through the Disabled Children's Partnership and Special Educational Consortium to ensure that the Government is aware of the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, and the measures taken to combat it, on children with SEND and their families.

NSN – were trying to embrace technology through webinars and round table events. They would be responding to the Education and Select Committee inquiry on the impact of COVID-19. NSN were looking into opportunities to have social distancing school visits – on-line where a headteacher can present their school and others can join to ensure networking opportunities across the country.

RCSLT – The majority of RCSLT focus has been around adults – members redeployed to intensive care and rehabilitation post COVID-19. CW has continued supporting C & YP and working with therapists about how they can and are providing services remotely. They were trying to help members plan how they would work once schools re-open for more children. Mental Health Awareness week published a fact sheet on mental health and children with speech and language difficulties. <https://www.rcslt.org/-/media/docs/RCSLTCYPMHSA4Digital.pdf>

Engage – BH explained that the National Conference had now moved to 2021 – National Awards have been postponed – National Creative Awards now closed and winners will be announced soon. Concern about Ofsted’s expectation of special schools over the next 12 months.

SSV – Nothing to report

NAHT – RT commented that Transport kept coming up at various meetings – what might be being delivered now may not be attainable as numbers increase. The number of requests for EHCPs was going up. There was evidence that some pupils are doing better through accessing education on-line. Conversations were taking place about formal curriculum verses emotional curriculum as pupils return. New terminology was developing such as bubbles and pods
RW – Comprehensive advice and guidance pages on NAHT website were open access so anyone can view them. NAHT were looking at the Ofsted team make-up for special school inspections and investigating how many SEND specialists there are within the inspection team.

DB thanked everyone for attending. Meeting closed at 12.35 pm Next Meeting to be held on 1st and 8th July