

# **Encouraging positive change for children with special educational needs**

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**Hear me out!**

# Things are improving...

- The **proportion of children with SEN achieving the national benchmark of 5 GCSEs at A-C has doubled;**
- The **gap between children with SEN and those without SEN has narrowed slightly, albeit from a low base.**

(DCSF, Breaking the Link, 2010)

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# ...but stubborn problems remain

- Missed opportunities for early intervention and appropriate assessment
- Parents forced up the system to find skilled staff where children need them
- Low expectations for children with SEN and a lack of focus on outcomes
- Poor communication with parents

# Opportunities for early intervention and assessment: evidence

- There is **not enough expertise at school level** to identify needs early.

(Lamb Inquiry, 2009)

- For children with the most significant needs, **access to specialist (statutory) assessments is slow and too adversarial.**

(Select Committee Inquiry into SEN, 2006)

# Opportunities for early intervention and assessment: evidence (2)

- Early Support is a successful and popular model of early intervention for families with disabled children who have complex needs. Early Support has been found to
  - Successfully involve parents
  - Be cost effective
  - Promote integrated working

(University of Manchester Phase 3 evaluation, 2006)

# Encouraging change

- Expand the Early Support model by taking it through the age range
- Streamline assessments across services, including schools
- Clarify when a local authority should be providing statutory assessments and who is best placed to carry out the process

# Skilled staff where children need them: evidence

- **Not enough basic teacher skills** - 43% of NQTs do not feel confident of supporting children with SEN.

(NASUWT, Sink or Swim, 2010)

- **Not enough specialist knowledge at school level** - parents are forced up the system into adversarial competition for resources.

(Lamb Inquiry, 2009)



## Skilled staff where children need them: evidence (2)

- Schools want **quicker access to specialist support** from local authorities for children with lower incidence need.

(Ofsted, A Statement is not enough, 2010)

- Parents would have greater confidence in the system if there was **clarification of the respective responsibilities of school and local authorities** to meet different types of need.

(NatCen, Parental Confidence in the SEN System, 2009)

# Encouraging change

- Focus on improving professional development in SEN
- Focus on improving specialist knowledge at school level
- Clarify respective responsibilities and develop services strategically
- Address the issue of the potential impact of the expanding Academies programme on the provision of specialist services

# High expectations and a focus on outcomes: evidence

- There is still a **culture of low expectations** for children with SEN. One teacher recently asked an Ofsted inspector: 'You wouldn't expect to see progress, would you, with such difficulties.'

(Ofsted, A Statement is not enough, 2010)

- There is **too much focus on process and not enough on outcomes** for children with SEN.

(Lamb Inquiry, 2009)

## High expectations and focus on outcomes: evidence (2)

- Schools that **closely monitor the progress** of all children, including children with SEN, **improve the attainment of all** children.

(DCSF, Making good progress, 2010)

# Encouraging change

- A focus on the highest expectations for disabled children and children with SEN and on their ambitions for the future
- Stronger incentives for schools to focus on the progress of all children as well as attainment
- Work with schools to ensure that where children receive special educational provision that this is linked to outcomes

# Building parental involvement: evidence

- Parental involvement is of **great importance in a child's development and in supporting early intervention** where a child has SEN.
- Parents have **confidence in the system when they have a close and supportive relationship** with the school.

(SEN Code of Practice, 2001)

(NatCen, Parental Confidence in the SEN System, 2009)

## Building parental involvement: evidence (2)

- **Parental involvement in a child's schooling**, for a child between the ages of seven and 16, **is a more powerful force** than family background, size of family and level of parental education.

(Desforges and Abouchaar, DfES Research Report 433, 2003)

# Encouraging change

- Support programmes which build school's and services' willingness and capacity to involve parents eg Achievement for All
- Focus on mothers and fathers, and other carers
- Provide support for parents in a way that is appropriate for them through parent partnership services and the voluntary sector



# Opportunities for positive change?

- Health white paper
- Education and children white paper
- Welfare white paper
- SEN green paper
- Clare Tickell review of the EYFS
- Graham Allen review of early intervention
- .....Comprehensive Spending Review



**Thank you!**