

Reaching my potential: The value of SEND provision demonstrated through learners' stories

Report-at-a-glance

Overall finding



£380k

value per child with SEND with needs met

Special educational provision that works gives learners hope for the future: that they can achieve and fulfil their potential. In doing so they may be less dependent on their families and public services, and they may be able to contribute to society. If learners do achieve their potential this is worth on average **at least £380k** over the lifetime of the eight learners whose stories we tell in this research.

Purpose

NASS commissioned Sonnet Advisory & Impact C.I.C. to research the value of special educational provision, and to answer the following research questions for a set of learners with complex special educational needs or disabilities (SEND):

- How do outcomes differ for learners with SEND who have their needs met at the right time?
- What are the wider benefits to learners, their families and society of having their needs met?

What is special educational provision?

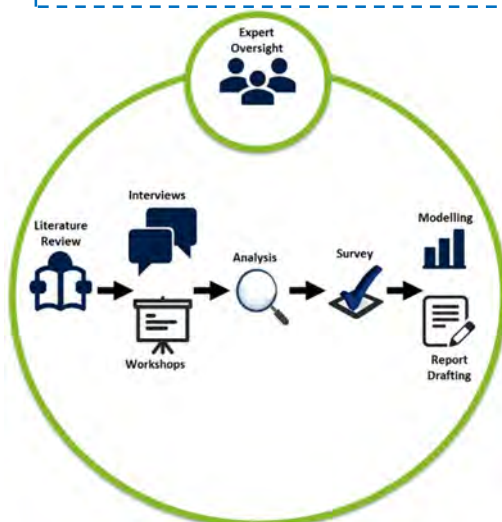
It seeks to remove identified barriers to learning for those with SEND. Special educational provision therefore may include: services relating to mental health, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and other therapies like music therapy, art therapy and hydro therapy.

What is SEND?

These are physical, emotional, or learning needs that affect learners' ability to access education, and restrict their ability to understand, retain and apply learning. This report focuses on eight learners with complex needs.

Why do we need special educational provision?

We want all children and young people to achieve the 'best possible outcomes' for them. Learners with SEND need greater support to achieve their potential, particularly when it comes to education. Special educational provision can support learners with SEND to reach their potential and make successful transitions into adulthood.



Research approach

We took a mixed-methods approach to explore the stories of learners with SEND and the value of provision that meets their needs. Our research was primarily undertaken with staff in special schools. We also interviewed parents of three learners with SEND and one local authority commissioner. We also drew on academic and grey literature.

Using our findings, we developed profiles for eight learners with complex SEND, and explored how meeting their needs makes a difference to them and those around them. For five of the archetypes (Tim, Ade, Sarah, Olivia and Charlie) we undertook quantitative analysis, expressing the value created in monetary terms.

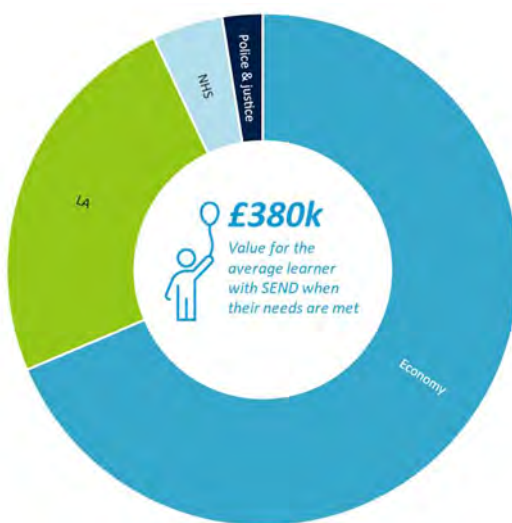
Key thematic findings

- Each learner with SEND has a unique combination of needs, strengths, and potential. Provision that meets needs is tailored to each individual learner in terms of the services delivered and the settings in which it is delivered
- Standardisation of educational provision by identified special educational needs may limit chances for children with most the complex needs to realise their potential, and may have implications for the wider public finances
- Special educational provision that meets needs has the following qualities:



Key quantitative findings

If we invest in provision that meets needs of learners with complex SEND, it could yield an average of at least £380k per learner across their lifetimes in value to society:



Meet our archetypes and the difference that provision that meets needs makes to them:



Tim

Needs: Has autism and communication challenges
Potential if needs are met: Qualifications, paid work and improved relationships with his family
Value created when his needs are met: £744k



Ade

Needs: Has a combination of autism, anxiety and physical needs
Potential if needs are met: Developing key life-skills and volunteering regularly
Value created when his needs are met: £554k



Sarah

Needs: SEMH, experience of abuse and is a looked-after child
Potential if needs are met: Forming and maintaining positive relationships, qualifications and paid employment
Value created when her needs are met: £246k



Olivia

Needs: Has cerebral palsy and has communication challenges
Potential if needs are met: Can communicate more easily, and direct her care and can move into supported living
Value created when her needs are met: £59k



Charlie


Needs: Sensory impairment, learning and communication difficulties
Potential if needs are met: Confidence to build friendships, gains qualifications and paid employment
Value created when her needs are met: £303k

The key question raised by this research

We have demonstrated that special educational provision that meets needs, while more expensive in the short term, in the longer term yields net benefits to children, young people and society. This raises the question: is this net value sufficiently recognised and taken into account when changes in national policy take place, and within the context of localised commissioning decisions?

Recommendations

Based on our quantitative and thematic findings, we propose a series of recommendations:

- A. SEND policy and regulatory changes should be driven by evidence-based analysis of the current and future impact of SEND provision. Any future statutory changes should have their social impacts and financial implications fully assessed. All stakeholders in the SEND system have a role to play in demonstrating impact in its widest sense – financial and social. High quality data gathered at school-level needs to feed through to local authority commissioners and beyond to national policy makers, and to be believed and acted upon.
 - B. Benchmarking of provision needs to be approached with care. Young people with special needs must be afforded the same aspiration as the general population – to be the best they can be. The SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan from the Department for Education (March 23) sets aspirations of ‘good outcomes’ for these young people, but these must not be ‘good’ in the context of the aspirations and approaches of non-SEND provision but must support the reasonable and tailored aspirations of the individual young person, whether with SEND or not. Setting targets and measuring impact should come from the front line of delivery, so standards should be set from a deep understanding of what is happening and aspirational for young people and their teachers.
 - C. In preparation for policy changes, schools need to keep good records of provision for each individual learner, learners’ destinations on leaving school and what differences their provision has made for learners. Families can be involved and help with this, reflecting the importance of their role as recognised in the SEND and AP Improvement Plan. This will help improve the evidence base, and will support schools’ discussions with commissioners, as well as inform any future research into longer-term outcomes for people with SEND and the specialist provision they received at school age.
 - D. Key current local authority intervention programmes should be closely monitored and evaluated, and where they are having a negative impact be reconsidered. For example, the potential impact on learners in local authority areas subject to Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value in SEND programmes should be tracked. This would provide evidence that can be used to inform regulatory impact assessments on the social and financial costs and benefits of any future changes.
 - E. We need further research to determine how to identify the right provision in the right setting at the right time for learners. Ultimately, we need to build on this research to better understand the key factors behind successful placements. Schools and commissioners should gather evidence from and seek to learn lessons from each learner’s individual educational journey, particularly when it involves multiple school placements. Collectively, we also need to better understand what influences parents’ and carers’ school choice decisions, and what factors drive local authorities’ decisions regarding where learners receive special educational provision.
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- F. We welcome the planned work on Education Health and Care Plan formats set out in the SEND and AP improvement Plan. The findings of this research indicate that value is often added through elements of provision which are not routinely captured in EHCPs currently, e.g. emotional wellbeing. We would like to ensure that future EHCP templates and guidance capture broad and aspirational outcomes for children and their families, as initially envisaged in the 2014 reforms. All stakeholders within the SEND system have a role to play in this.

- G. Investments made in provision for individual children make returns beyond that individual child over a considerable period of time. Within the SEND change programme, we would like to see scope to explore models which acknowledge and support this. This includes the planned work to secure greater Health involvement in SEND provision but could meaningfully go beyond this to consider whole-place/whole lifetime budgets for those with the most complex needs to move beyond the 'silos' of individual agency budgets. This, in turn, will require a dedicated focus on commissioning for children with the most complex needs and an acknowledgement that this may need local, regional and national focus.

- H. Our findings consistently demonstrate the particular value that good mental health support offered by special schools delivers. To meet the needs of their learners many schools may deliver services without appropriate funding, guidance or oversight (for example nursing services or mental health therapies). We welcome the intent in the SEND and AP Improvement Plan to clarify the role of Health provision within SEND provision. We would like to see a specific focus on mental health within this. Schools should record systematically the care and mental health support they provide to learners, and which interventions are effective. Findings should be used to inform government guidance to support the wider sector in delivery of these services. We would like to see the suggested recommendation from the National Safeguarding Panel in phase 2 of the Hesley report to consider joint Ofsted/CQC inspection of provision explored further as part of this.



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Registered Office: 45 Flitwick road, Ampthill, Bedfordshire, MK45 2NS

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