

The time is now:

Addressing missed opportunities for
Special Educational Needs Support and
Coordination in our schools

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List of acronyms

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EHCP	Education, Health and Care plan
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked-After Children
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
nasen	National Association of Special Educational Needs
NA SENCO	The National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination
NEU	The National Education Union
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEN*	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND*	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TA	Teaching Assistant

*Note: the terms SEN/ SEND are used interchangeably within the report

Executive summary

Overview

In September 2018, the National Education Union (NEU), nasen and Bath Spa University conducted a joint research project exploring the workload of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO) in schools. The National SENCO Workload Survey received over 1900 responses and led to the publication of the report, [It's about time: The impact of SENCO workload on the professional and the school](#) (Curran et al., 2018).

The research team undertook a review of the survey in October 2019, with the aim of exploring whether the report had impacted on SENCOs and, as a consequence, outcomes for children with additional needs. The review also explored the current issues and priorities SENCOs, and others, have identified in relation to the development of Special Educational Needs (SEN) in their settings. The review received over 1800 responses. This report sets out the key findings, and related recommendations, from the review.

Key findings

- In line with the previous survey, 96% of SENCOs (n=1400) and 96% of all respondents (n=1553) think that SENCOs should have legally protected time. Of the 40 headteachers who responded to this question, 85% (n=34) believe that SENCOs should have protected time.
- 17% of SENCOs (n= 267) stated that they had been allocated more dedicated time to facilitate the role in 2019/ 2020, than in comparison to the previous academic year (2018/2019).
- 22% of SENCOs (n=340) stated that they had been allocated less time to facilitate the role in 2019/2020, than in comparison to the previous academic year. However, of the 364 secondary SENCOs who responded to the question regarding time allocation for the role, 117 (32%) stated that they had less time allocated to the role in 2019/ 2020, than in comparison to last academic year.
- Whilst 50% of SENCOs (n=779) stated that their allocated time in 2019/2020 had stayed the same as the previous academic year, the way in which their time was being used had changed. Changing expectations from senior leaders, including requirements to undertake additional, unrelated duties during 'SENCO time', as well as a broadening remit, were cited as reasons which impacted on the effective functioning of the role.
- In addition to this, changing school structures and new, additional roles were cited as having an impact on SENCO time, despite allocated time technically staying the same as the previous academic year. Further issues cited included changes to timetabling, an increased teaching load, changes to the school syllabus, allocation of additional roles, for example assistant head or safeguarding lead and budgetary constraints.
- Echoing the findings of the previous survey, nearly three-quarters of SENCOs (74 % n=1058) cited administration tasks as taking up the majority of their allocated SENCO time (previous survey in 2018, 71%). The time to complete Education, Health and Care plan needs assessment requests, as well as the paperwork requirements from local authorities in terms of providing evidence for referrals to SEN teams and needs assessments, were cited as specific issues which were problematic and time consuming.
- The most commonly cited request by SENCOs, to help them facilitate their role, was more support, particular more administration support. Notably this links with administration as the

most demanding activity which SENCOs state they spend most of their time engaged with. A key theme was the hope that reduced paperwork, or greater support with administration, would enable the SENCO to direct their work to supporting children, families and teachers.

- Headteachers, as well as SENCOs, stated that there were issues with local authority paperwork expectations, and that greater clarity and unification was required. Simplified referrals routes, and the ability to access timely, appropriate local authority support were cited as key changes which would positively impact on the facilitation of the SENCO role and, as a consequence, positively impact on provision for children and support for families.
- The respondents, overwhelmingly, felt that the greatest priority in schools was to provide effective provision for children with SEN, with a key focus on developing the skills of staff in relation to High Quality Teaching. A number of respondents directly linked this to a requirement for teachers to provide increased support to children and young people in class due to a lack of funding for specific interventions. SENCOs stated that more was expected of teachers, as they were required to provide support within class, which previously may have been provided by an additional adult, or through an intervention. As a result, SENCOs recognised that teachers required help in this area.

Recommendations

In response to the Timpson Review of School Exclusion (DfE, 2019), the Government committed to revise the 0 – 25 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) by the end of 2020. The following recommendations are made in light of this response, as well in relation to the development of the SENCO role, and related provision, at a national and local level.

For the review of the SEND Code of Practice in relation to the SENCO role

- SENCOs should have protected time to allow the effective facilitation of the role, to enable them to work with, and advocate for, children, young people and their families. This requirement should be statutory, in addition to PPA and time required for other roles held and should be specific to the size and demographic of the school. Guidance for school leaders regarding the time a SENCO requires should be provided within the revised SEND Code of Practice (See Appendix 1).
- To support the development of inclusive provision, it is necessary that the SENCO role is viewed as both strategic and senior. Therefore, it should be a statutory requirement that the SENCO is a member of the school senior leadership team by September 2021. This should be specifically in relation to the SENCO role, and not as a result of other duties.
- The review of the SEND Code of Practice should consider whether it is appropriate to continue to refer to the 'SENCO' in the singular. Reference to a team approach would reflect collective responsibility for SEN provision as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice, as well as support the facilitation and capacity of the SENCO role. Particular consideration should be given as to how the role is facilitated in secondary schools and alternative provision.
- The revised SEND Code of Practice should include guidance for Multi-Academy Trusts regarding the function and execution of the SENCO role within their individual schools. This should include clarity regarding whether a SENCO can work across more than one school, and how this links to ensuring SENCOs have adequate, protected time to undertake their role. The

review should also acknowledge how changing school structures have impacted on SEN leadership roles and account for this, for example the role of 'Director of Inclusion'.

For the review of the SEND Code of Practice in relation to provision for children with SEN

- The legal definition of Special Educational Needs (SEN) was formalised in 1981 and remains the legal definition today. The legal term for SEN should be reviewed in light of rapid development in sector understanding regarding neuro-diversity, as well the changing demographic of our school population. The application of the term, in particular the way in which the term is understood and interpreted in educational settings, should be explored with a specific focus on how teachers, SENCOs and other leaders can be supported in applying this term effectively and consistently.
- The four broad areas of need as defined in the SEND Code of Practice should be revisited to ensure that they provide accurate guidance for education professionals when planning special educational provision. Greater clarity could support professionals in identifying, supporting and monitoring pupils with SEN accurately and effectively.
- The review of the SEND Code of Practice should reconsider the use and application of the 'category' SEN Support, particularly as to whether it is appropriate to have one term to represent a broad and diverse group. The review should consider the potential issues that the application of such a term may have in relation to the graduated approach process and how this is facilitated within schools.
- Chapter 6 of the SEND Code of Practice should be reviewed, specifically how the chapter is applied in secondary settings and alternative provision. It is recommended that separate guidance should be produced for primary schools, secondary schools and alternative provision, particularly in relation to how the statutory guidance can be effectively implemented.

For the development of consistent, effective SEN provision nationally

- The variation of SEN processes and practices across local authorities should be urgently reviewed. Specifically, the review should investigate and evaluate the additional non-statutory paperwork which local authorities often require from schools prior to a needs assessment.
- To develop consistency of practice across local authorities, and to reduce administrative demands, a single, national template should be developed for the needs assessment process. In addition to this, a single, national template for Education, Health and Care plans should be co-produced; such a template should draw upon identified good practice in this area. Templates should be accessible online, via a single point of entry portal to enable efficient and accessible, yet secure, information sharing between lead professionals. In addition, such a system should consider the on-going, safe and secure information sharing between relevant parties, for example between local authorities when children transfer between schools.
- A nation-wide SEND survey, involving all interested parties, should be conducted. This should be a survey which seeks to encompass the views of all those who are involved with special educational needs provision. This should include children, young people and families, as well

as educational providers and other organisations. The survey should be co-produced with all parties, to ensure a participatory approach, with a focus on exploring and responding to the concerns raised by the Education Select Committee and National Audit Office reports, as well as our own survey findings (Curran et al., 2018).

- An independent review of universal provision should be undertaken. Specifically, the review should seek to establish the definition of High Quality Teaching, and the related universal expectations in classrooms. The review should endeavour to provide guidance and support to education professionals to help develop understanding and consistency regarding High Quality Teaching within classrooms.

For the effective facilitation of the SENCO role in educational settings

- The Department for Education (DfE) should provide sufficient funding for the SENCO role for every school in the country. The cost of training new SENCOs should also be considered.
- SENCOs should be given additional administration support, to enable them to target their skills and expertise on developing provision for pupils with SEN in their settings. This role should form part of the SEN team, to support the view that SEN provision is a collective responsibility.
- The SENCO should be placed on the leadership pay scale, in order to reflect the demands of the role, as well as the complex and senior nature of the role.
- The DfE should exemplify an expectation that schools will build protected time into their budgets and timetables for the SENCO and SEND team in model financial planning tools, for example, ensuring all timetabling planning computer programmes are prepopulated with appropriate SENCO time allocations, as per Appendix 1.
- SENCOs should have access to supervision to enable them to reflect on decision making and to continue to develop good practice within their setting. The implementation of supervision would also seek to support SENCOs with the complex and challenging situations they are frequently working within. The occurrence of supervision sessions should be dependent upon the experience and needs of the SENCO, with the suggestion that SENCOs new to role should access 12 sessions per year and experienced SENCOs should access 6 sessions per year, comparative with allied health professionals working with children and young people with SEND/ learning disabilities and their families.
- Consideration should be given to the location of the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination and how the award relates to the wider structure of continuing professional development. It would be prudent to align the qualification alongside other development pathways, for example the National Professional Qualification pathways, to further integrate the National Award as a key career pathway for teachers.
- An annual, national review of the SENCO survey should be undertaken at the start of every academic year to establish patterns related to workload, activities and priorities as well as role retention. The survey will seek to inform policy and continuing professional development.

Introduction

In the autumn of 2018, the NEU, nasen and Bath Spa University conducted a joint research project exploring the workload of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO) in schools. The National SENCO Workload Survey received over 1900 responses and led to the publication of the report, [It's about time: The impact of SENCO workload on the professional and the school](#) (Curran et al., 2018). A year later, in October 2019, a review of the survey was undertaken with the aim of exploring whether the report had impacted on SENCOs and, as a consequence, outcomes for children with additional needs. The review also explored the current issues and priorities SENCOs, and others, have identified in relation to the development of Special Educational Needs (SEN) in their settings. This report, *The time is now; addressing missed opportunities for SEN Support and coordination in our schools*, presents the findings from the review.

The survey was open for just under 4 weeks (Wednesday 25th September – Sunday 20th September 2019) and was open to all those who worked in education. 1819 individuals contributed to the survey, with 1806 giving their consent for their data to be reported within this document. Just under half of this group (45% n=802) had read the previous SENCO Workload report, whilst 38% (n=677) stated that they had contributed to the National SENCO Workload Survey in 2018.

The wider context

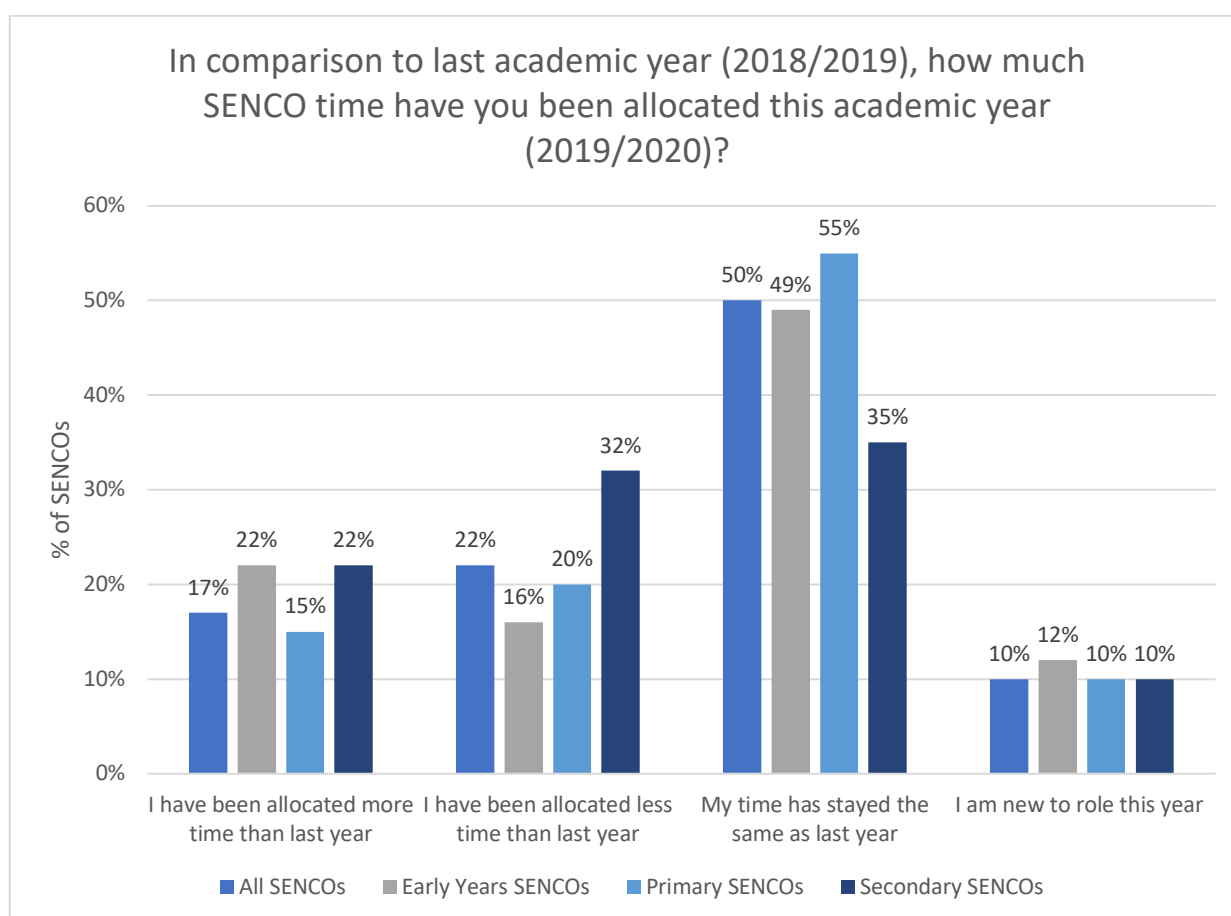
Since the publication of [‘It's about time: The impact of SENCO workload on the professional and the school](#) (Curran et al., 2018) there have been a number of significant, national developments within the area of SEN. Most recently this has included [Support for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in England](#), a report published by the National Audit Office, (NAO, 2019) and the House of Commons Education Committee's [Special Educational Needs and Disability First Report of Session 2019](#) (House of Commons, 2019). Both documents reported significant concerns regarding how children with SEN are currently supported within our education system, with the latter citing that whilst the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms were ‘the right ones... implementation has been badly hampered by poor administration and a challenging funding environment in which local authorities and schools have lacked the ability to make transformative change’ (House of Commons, 2019 p. 3).

In addition to this, publication of the SENCO Workload report (Curran et al., 2018) has led to Whole School SEND's *Effective Deployment of the SENCO* project and nasen's *Identifying SEN in the Early Years – the role of the SENCO* research project. Both projects seek to support SENCOs and senior leaders with the effective facilitation of the role, in order to positively impact on outcomes for children with SEND.

Key findings

SENCO workload in 2019 – allocated time

The survey sought to explore whether SENCO workload was changing. Specifically, the review sought to explore the nature of activities SENCOs were currently engaged with, and how this related to the time SENCOs have allocated to facilitate the role in their settings. Of the 1806 participants who responded to the survey, 1601 were SENCOs currently in post. 89% of SENCOs (n=1425) stated that they worked in a mainstream setting, with the majority of respondents working in a primary setting (66% n= 1056). The following section reports on the contributions from SENCO participants.



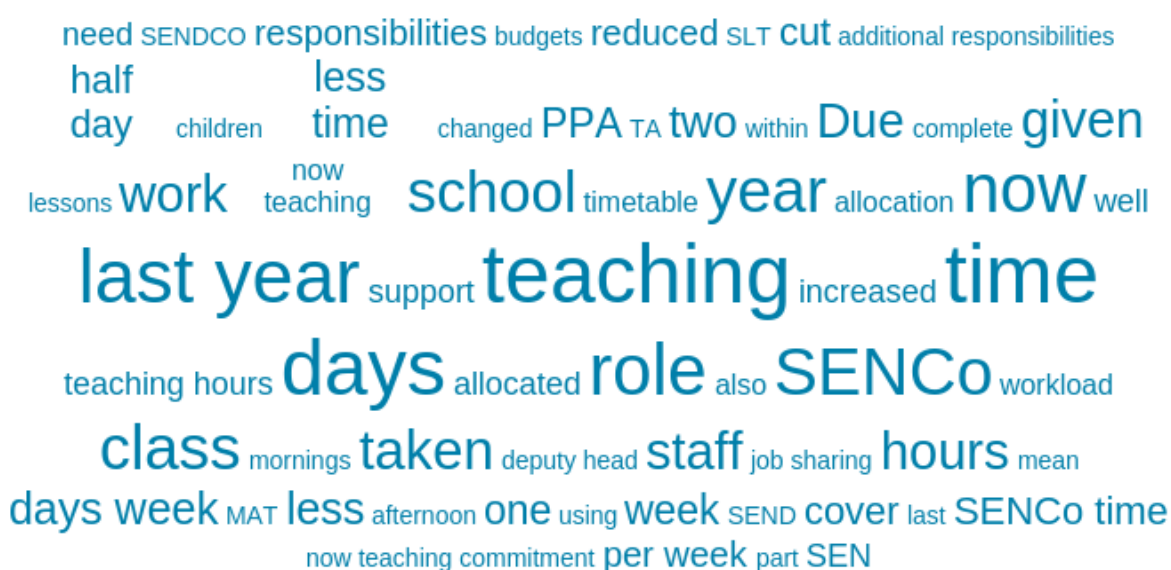
- 1547 SENCOs responded to a question relating to time allocation for the role.
- 17% of SENCOs (n= 267) stated that they had been allocated more time in 2019/ 2020 to facilitate the role, than in the previous academic year, with the majority working in primary settings (n=153).
- 22% of SENCOs (n=340) stated that they had been allocated less time in 2019/ 2020 to facilitate the role, than in the previous academic year.
- However, of the 364 **secondary** SENCOs who responded to the question regarding time allocation for the role, 117 (32%) stated that they had less time allocated to the role in 2019/ 2020, than in comparison to last academic year.

- The predominant reason cited for this change was an increase in teaching responsibilities, with some respondents explicitly stating that decreasing budgets were the primary reason for this change.

Due to budget and staffing cuts, my teaching role has increased, and my SENCO time has been halved.

Due to diminished budgets we now employ less staff. I am now Deputy Head, SENCO, Inclusion Lead (High EAL School) and teach 0.5 of the week.

Over the last three years my SENCO time has reduced from 8 hours to 2 hours.



- Whilst 50% of SENCOs (n=779) stated that their time had stayed the same as the previous academic year, the way in which their time was being used had changed. Changing expectations from senior leaders, including requirements to undertake additional, unrelated duties during 'SENCO time', as well as a broadening remit, were cited as reasons which impacted on the effective functioning of the role.
- In addition to this, changing school structures and new, additional roles were cited as having an impact on SENCO time, despite allocated time technically staying the same as the previous academic year. Further issues cited included changes to timetabling, an increased teaching load, changes to the school syllabus, allocation of additional roles, for example assistant head or safeguarding lead and budgetary constraints.

It [SENCO allocated time] has technically stayed the same, but my time was well protected last year. This year it's slowly slipping [that] I'm required to do additional cover etc.

- Of the 723 SENCOs who read the previous report 'It's about time' 60 SENCOs stated that they received either additional support or additional time, as a direct result of reading/ sharing the report with senior leaders and/ or head teachers.

Last year my SENCO time reduced. The report result[ed] in my head teacher changing my time back again to that it has been the previous year. This was still not the recommended time from the report but was an improvement.

The survey really helped me to raise awareness of the national situation. As a direct result I now have an assistant three days a week. Thank you. It is still tough but that has helped enormously.

SENCO workload in 2019 – key SENCO tasks

- 1439 SENCOs responded to a question which asked about the type of activities which take up most of their 'SENCO time'.
- Echoing the findings of the previous survey, nearly three-quarters of SENCOs (74 % n=1058) cited administration tasks as taking up the majority of their allocated SENCO time (previous survey 71%). The time to complete Education, Health and Care plan needs assessment requests, as well as the paperwork requirements from local authorities in terms of providing evidence for referrals to SEN teams and needs assessments, were cited as specific issues which were problematic and time consuming.

I cannot bear the fact that I now spend my time doing paperwork and not using my skills, experience and understanding of learners with additional needs to work with learners, work with colleagues, to support learners with additional needs or be co-productive with parents of learners with additional needs.

Most of my time is spent sending and responding to emails to/from parents or outside agencies, making phone calls, arranging meetings/consultations. I also spend time creating data reports every term. Writing my support plans, reviews and requests for EHCP assessments also takes a lot of time. I would like to spend more time in the classroom monitoring what our SEND provision looks like over the school but do not have the time to do this.

Most of my time is spent filling out a lot of paperwork. EHCP requests take hours.

A lot of time is spent completing Local Authority paperwork, some of which is arduous and possibly unnecessary; some of it is repetitive and time consuming.

- Of the 267 SENCOs (17%) who reported that they had been allocated additional time this academic year, 169 respondents stated that they were primarily spending their 'extra' time on administration activities, including annual review paperwork, phone calls and referrals.
- As with the previous survey, SENCOs cited taking part or holding meetings as the second most common weekly task, with 60% of SENCOs (n=861) rating this as the second most common activity, in the average week.

So much of my time is taken up by planning meetings, attending meetings and then acting on actions from meetings. I would much rather spend my time supporting colleagues with SEN support.

I do not spend enough time supporting teachers in how to support SEND pupils in their classes, most of time is spent attending meetings, contacting parents and meeting parents to either support them, or less often, to help their child.

- In line with the previous survey, 96% of SENCOs (n=1400) and 96% of all respondents (n=1553) think that SENCOs should have legally protected time. Of the 40 headteachers who responded to this question, 85% (n=34) believe that SENCOs should have protected time.

Support for SENCOs

The survey sought to explore what, in addition to more time, would help the SENCO more effectively facilitate their role in school.

- The most commonly cited request by SENCOs, to help them facilitate their role, was more support, particular more administration support. Notably this links with administration as the most demanding activity which SENCOs state they spend most of their time engaged with. It is also notable that 67% of SENCOs who stated that they have been allocated more SENCO time this academic year are primarily spending the 'extra' time on administration tasks. A key theme was the hope that reduced paperwork, or greater support with administration, would enable the SENCO to direct their work to supporting children, families and teachers. Of the 267 SENCOs who stated they had been given additional time, only 22 stated that they had primarily spent their additional time training and supporting staff. This indicates that additional administrative personnel may positively impact on the SENCOs' capacity to support colleagues and develop practice across the school.

Dedicated admin support designed to free me up to have a quality impact on teaching and learning.

Admin support so more time can be spent by the SENCO doing direct work with children etc than photocopying and filing reports.

- Yet, greater support requirements for the role extended beyond that of additional administrative support. SENCOs voiced a desire for a 'deputy SENCO' and a SEN team, noting these are key changes which would positively impact on the role.

To work as part of a team and not a sole job within a school, I work and manage a team of three and it makes such a difference.

- However, administrative support was **not** noted by headteachers as a priority for SENCO support. Specifically, headteachers mentioned that there needed to be more funding and greater support and clarity from external agencies, including local authorities.
- Headteachers, as well as SENCOs, stated issues with local authority paperwork expectations; greater clarity and unification was required. Simplified referrals routes, and the ability to access timely, appropriate local authority support were cited as key changes which would positively impact on the facilitation of the SENCO role and, as a consequence, provision for children and support for families.

Reliable, prompt and consistent responses from the local authority. I work across two London boroughs who operate with different paperwork templates, funding formulae etc. and both authorities have constantly changing staff teams with frequent requests to send documents again as they lose them in the system. SENCOs are stuck in the middle.

County SEND teams to do their job and to be held to account by someone other than schools – we have enough to do and are managing these children with little or no support from SEN...

Very clear guidelines on what is expected on any paperwork for EHCPs, annual review. No repeating of information on numerous forms.

Local authorities working together to make paperwork the same and link services so that support can be obtained quickly and effectively to meet children's needs.

- Increased funding and training were also cited by SENCOs as key changes which would positively impact on the facilitation of the SENCO role. Whilst SENCOs called for more funding for children with complex needs, they also cited issues with funding and the impact that this had on their access to resources, support for both children and staff as well as the impact of decreasing numbers of teaching assistants.
- In addition to this, supervision for SENCOs was a theme which permeated a number of responses.

[The] SENCO role evolves every day and there are times when it is completely overwhelming. In the same way counsellors have supervision, to my mind there are times when I feel like it would be a real positive to have that opportunity.

The need for supervision. It's emotionally draining [...] It is an isolating job and more needs to be done to encourage collaboration.

I think SENCOs should receive supervision from an external provider to help them support the needs of the CYP [children and young people] they support. We currently provide this in a PRU and Specialist S,E & MH needs provision where all staff are given the option to attend the supervision on a voluntary basis. Supervision is key to supporting professional development, reducing burnout and compassion fatigue as well as providing SENCO and wider staff with information and the professional development they need to support the S,E & MH needs of the CYP and Families in their care. We are monitoring and evaluating, but my sense is that it will reduce sick leave and improve staff retention. SENCOs work extremely hard and deserve support to maintain their role and their own mental health and physical wellbeing.

Current priorities related to provision for SEN

Given the current issues identified with the SENCO role, the survey sought to explore the priorities for SEN, for the forthcoming academic year. 1486 participants responded to this question.

- The respondents, overwhelmingly, felt the greatest priority in schools was to provide effective provision for children with SEN. A key theme was ensuring timely, appropriate provision to ensure that students received the support they needed.

Timely, effective support in place to meet children's needs.

Ensuring all children with needs [...] have the right support to ensure they achieve their potential.

- In addition to the above, a prevalent theme through was the need to focus on High Quality Teaching and the training needs of staff. A pervasive idea was that teachers need to view themselves as 'teachers of SEND', reflecting the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). Whilst linked to this idea was the necessity of training, there was also a sense that an increased focus on the importance of High Quality Teaching was required as this was fundamental to developing effective SEN provision in a setting. Related issues included the way in which teachers applied the graduated approach, and a specific need for training and support in this area.

Improving teachers' knowledge of SEND. Getting more whole school awareness and 'buy-in' that SEND is important and getting SEND right is beneficial to all students.

Ensuring all teaching know that they are teachers of SEN and make sure provision is good in class.

Teacher knowledge of SEN, understanding of SEN, living by the ethos that every teacher is a teacher of SEN – not just the SEN team.

Developing staff expertise in meeting the needs of students with SEND. All staff need to fully understand and engage with this. Too many rely on the SENDCO and/or TA support to provide a personalised curriculum. ‘Every teacher is a teacher of students with SEND’ needs to be rigorously enforced. This should be supported from the start (in teacher training) and be an integral part of teacher assessment. This is going to become more and more important over the next few years.

- Some responses explicitly made a link between needing to ensure High Quality Teaching and supporting staff, suggesting that due to a lack of funding, more support needed to be provided in class by the class or subject teacher.

Ensuring that all teachers are able to meet the needs of their SEND learners without any interventions (due to funding and staffing issues).

Ensuring that all children get the provision needed regardless of the financial pressures.

- In addition to this, the theme of provision for children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties was central throughout the responses. When asked an open-ended question regarding the current priorities for SEND in the setting, whilst the majority responded in a generic sense regarding focusing on support for children with SEND, through provision and/ or high quality teaching, 84 respondents specifically stated that focusing on SEMH was their top priority for the academic year.

Supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils with SEN as I have seen increasing levels of distress and anxiety among this group.

Mental health is a huge concern, and my SENCO duties often take second place to dealing with SEMH.

To improve staff understanding of and support for SEMH needs.

make progress children SEND monitoring Reviewing high needs
Early identification place budget support staff support pupils SEN children
SEMH needs Making sure teaching staff needs children communication
EHCPs including classroom tracking children need referrals
effective well SEMH access meet needs levels EHCP
complex needs work learning Improving children SEN
students appropriate support children Training staff
SEND SEN pupils school SEN support teachers
complete interventions resources children
effectively Ensuring TAs support paperwork
need understanding staff help provision
Speech language progress enable pupils EHCP applications
SEN Increasing funding use Ensuring children
strategies training systems better parents first teaching year
quality first planning provide impact assessment needs met
time curriculum met differentiation Managing know Developing
children make class SEND pupils new right staff training teaching
support students feel QFT Finding Trying mental health

Methodology

The survey was based upon the previous National SENCO Workload survey. The review survey was piloted with SENCOs and educational professionals prior to dissemination.

The survey was open for just under 4 weeks (Wednesday 25th September – Sunday 20th September 2019) and was open to all those who worked in education. The survey was distributed through the following channels:

- The National SENCO Workload Survey website
- The National SENCO Workload Survey mailing list
- Social media, predominantly twitter and Facebook
- nasen mailing list
- Network contacts, including Local Authorities and National Award for SENCO providers

Ethical approval was granted by the Institute for Education, Bath Spa University. The research project follows BERA guidelines (2018) as part of the Association's Code of Conduct. Prior to completing the survey, participants were asked to provide their consent for their response data to be used and reported as part of the research project. Participants were made aware that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time, without reason, up until their submitted their responses. All responses to the survey have been contributed, and reported, anonymously.

Participants

The survey received 1826 responses, of these 1806 have consented for their response data to be collated for analysis and reported as part of the research project.

Participants included SENCOs, teachers, head teachers, Local Authority staff, consultants and outreach workers. The majority of respondents were SENCOs (89% n= 1601). 50 headteachers contributed to the survey (2.8%).

The majority of participants were from mainstream settings (86% n=1542). 5.5% of respondents (n=100) worked in an Early Years setting. The majority of respondents, 63% (n=1135) worked in a primary setting, including working in an infant, junior, first or middle school. 23% (n= 407) worked in a secondary setting. 28 respondents worked in a local authority. 83% of respondents work in a setting where the SENCO role is mandatory, with 30% of SENCOs (n= 549) working in an academy that was part of a Multi-Academy Trust.

Just under three-quarters of the respondents had heard of the National SENCO Workload Survey, with 45% (n=802) stating that they had read the previous SENCO Workload report, whilst 38% (n=677) stated that they had contributed to the National SENCO Workload Survey in 2018.

Reporting of findings

The findings discussed in this report are derived from the online survey data. All data from the pilot study has been discarded. For the purposes of the discussion, data reported reflects the views of all respondents, unless otherwise stated where relevant, for example, primary/ secondary settings.

Quantitative data is reported as both number of respondents and percentages, noting that percentages relate to the overall number of respondents who answered each specific question. Questions which elicited further responses from participants has been thematically analysed with quotes used for illustrative purposes.

Appendix 1

Guidance for SENCO time allocation by school size and cohort

The recommendations in the tables below are drawn from respondents who identified as mainstream SENCOs working in a local authority maintained, academy, multi-academy trust, or free school. Primary SENCO data was drawn from those SENCOs who identified as working in a first, infant, junior or primary school setting; secondary SENCOs were identified as working in a secondary, middle or upper school setting.

The guidance is based on data from the question “how much time in total do you think you would need each week to be able to complete the demands of your SENCO role effectively?”

The data has been formulated through averaging the responses from SENCOs by different setting type, size of school and percentage of SEN Support. The data was also reviewed by geographical area (urban, rural and coastal), however the responses did not show significant enough variation to be distinguished into their own categories. The greatest number of responses were from SENCOs in urban settings (68%), followed by rural (27%).

This data was also reviewed by number of EHCPs in the setting. Regardless of setting or SEN Support percentage, there was a clear trend that the number EHCPs increased the demand for SENCO time. As such further advice and guidance has been provided to enable SENCOs and headteachers to decide on a precise time allocation bespoke to each setting, including consideration of other factors identified through the data which also cause SENCOs to need more time. These include:

- Higher numbers of EHCPs in the setting
- Further qualifications which can increase workload, e.g. assessing for access arrangements
- A child or children whose needs required a great deal of support [in terms of time], e.g. those with very high levels of SEMH difficulties.

This data is not drawn from, or comparable to, SENCO time allocations in the independent or special school sectors, given the different requirements and demands of each, and therefore should not be used as a guideline for time in these settings.

This data also does not include time required for other responsibilities that are not part of the SENCO role e.g. teaching; planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time; Designated Teacher of LAC; Safeguarding; management of a Specialist Resource Provision; or non-SEN related SLT responsibilities. Additionally, this data does not demonstrate the size or nature of the deployable support team around the SENCO but assumes that there is one and that the size of the team is proportionate to the size and demographic of the school. A team might include a number of teaching assistants, administrative support, pastoral support workers etc. Further free guidance about maximising the impact of teaching assistant time can be found through the SEND Gateway, hosted by nasen.

Smaller than Average Size Schools

The average primary school has 260 pupils (1.5 class entry); the average secondary school has 910 pupils (6 class entry.)

Percentage of SEND (EHCP/SEN Support): Lower than average

For the purposes of this survey 'lower than average' is considered to be 6.7% or less.

School Type (Smaller than average size)	Recommended Time Allocation	Other Advice & Guidance to support decision making
Primary	1.5-2 days	Factors which would evidence need of the higher, or even additional, time requirements would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 or more EHCPs • Additional qualifications held by the SENCO, especially qualifications to assess (e.g. CCET, L7 SpLD) • A child in crisis requiring immediate and time-intensive support e.g. significant SEMH
Secondary	2.5-3 days	

Percentage of SEND (EHCP/SEN Support): Average

For the purposes of this survey 'average' is considered to be 11.7% (+/- 4%).

School Type (Smaller than average size)	Recommended Time Allocation	Other Advice & Guidance to support decision making
Primary	2-3 days	Factors which would evidence need of the higher, or even additional, time requirements would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 or more EHCPs • Additional qualifications held by the SENCO, especially qualifications to assess (e.g. CCET, L7 SpLD) • A child in crisis requiring immediate and time-intensive support e.g. significant SEMH
Secondary	3-4 days	

Percentage of SEND (EHCP/SEN Support): Higher than average

For the purposes of this survey 'higher than average' is considered to be 16.7% or more.

School Type (Smaller than average size)	Recommended Time Allocation	Other Advice & Guidance to support decision making
Primary	3-4 days	Factors which would evidence need of the higher, or even additional, time requirements would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 or more EHCPs • Additional qualifications held by the SENCO, especially qualifications to assess (e.g. CCET, L7 SpLD)
Secondary	4-5 days	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child in crisis requiring immediate and time-intensive support e.g. significant SEMH
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Average Size Schools

The average primary school has 260 pupils (1.5 class entry); the average secondary school has 910 pupils (6 class entry.)

Percentage of SEND (EHCP/SEN Support): Lower than average

For the purposes of this survey 'lower than average' is considered to be 6.7% or less.

School Type (Average size)	Recommended Time Allocation	Other Advice & Guidance to support decision making
Primary	2-3 days	Factors which would evidence need of the higher, or even additional, time requirements would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 or more EHCPs • Additional qualifications held by the SENCO, especially qualifications to assess (e.g. CCET, L7 SpLD) • A child in crisis requiring immediate and time-intensive support e.g. significant SEMH
Secondary	3-4 days	

Percentage of SEND (EHCP/SEN Support): Average

For the purposes of this survey 'average' is considered to be 11.7% (+/- 4%).

School Type (Average size)	Recommended Time Allocation	Other Advice & Guidance to support decision making
Primary	3-4 days	Factors which would evidence need of the higher, or even additional, time requirements would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 or more EHCPs • Additional qualifications held by the SENCO, especially qualifications to assess (e.g. CCET, L7 SpLD) • A child in crisis requiring immediate and time-intensive support e.g. significant SEMH
Secondary	4-5 days	

Percentage of SEND (EHCP/SEN Support): Higher than average

For the purposes of this survey 'higher than average' is considered to be 16.7% or more.

School Type (Average size)	Recommended Time Allocation	Other Advice & Guidance to support decision making
Primary	4-5 days	Factors which would evidence need of the higher, or even additional, time requirements would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 or more EHCPs
Secondary	5+ days*	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional qualifications held by the SENCO, especially qualifications to assess (e.g. CCET, L7 SpLD) • A child in crisis requiring immediate and time-intensive support e.g. significant SEMH
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* A SENCO in this type of School may need another qualified SENCO to work additional 1-2 days to support workload. This may be in the form of an Assistant SENCO or job share.

Larger than Average Size Schools

The average primary school has 260 pupils (1.5 class entry); the average secondary school has 910 pupils (6 class entry.)

Percentage of SEND (EHCP/SEN Support): Lower than average

For the purposes of this survey 'lower than average' is considered to be 6.7% or less.

School Type (Larger than average size)	Recommended Time Allocation	Other Advice & Guidance to support decision making
Primary	3-4 days	Factors which would evidence need of the higher, or even additional, time requirements would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 or more EHCPs • Additional qualifications held by the SENCO, especially qualifications to assess (e.g. CCET, L7 SpLD) • A child in crisis requiring immediate and time-intensive support e.g. significant SEMH
Secondary	4-5 days	

Percentage of SEND (EHCP/SEN Support): Average

For the purposes of this survey 'average' is considered to be 11.7% (+/- 4%).

School Type (Larger than average size)	Recommended Time Allocation	Other Advice & Guidance to support decision making
Primary	4-5 days	Factors which would evidence need of the higher, or even additional, time requirements would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 or more EHCPs (primary); 16 or more EHCPs (secondary) • Additional qualifications held by the SENCO, especially qualifications to assess (e.g. CCET, L7 SpLD) • A child in crisis requiring immediate and time-intensive support e.g. significant SEMH
Secondary	5+ days*	

Percentage of SEND (EHCP/SEN Support): Higher than average

For the purposes of this survey 'higher than average' is considered to be 16.7% or more.

School Type (Larger than average size)	Recommended Time Allocation	Other Advice & Guidance to support decision making
Primary	5+ days*	Factors which would evidence need of the higher, or even additional, time requirements would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 or more EHCPs • Additional qualifications held by the SENCO, especially qualifications to assess (e.g. CCET, L7 SpLD) • A child in crisis requiring immediate and time-intensive support e.g. significant SEMH
Secondary	5+ days*	

* This data is predicted data based upon the number of SENCOs requesting 5 days, considering also the trend throughout the data from other settings which is reflected here. This data is predicted as there was not an option provided for more than 5 days (a limitation of the survey.) Using this predicted time need, a SENCO in this type of School may need another qualified SENCO to work additional 1-2 days to support workload. This may be in the form of an Assistant SENCO or job share.

References

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