



SASC

2026 Annual Conference

3-5 June

Welcome



The week following our conference you will receive by email:

- Access to recorded version available following week for **12 months** from next week
- Confirmation of attendance email
- Feedback survey

Responding to the Schools White Paper

Lynn Greenwold
&
Louise Selby

Three Systems at Once

- Three systems at once
 - - Current system (existing law, Code of Practice)
 - - Transition system (audits, early adopters, new templates)
 - - Future system (national standards, digitised EHCs, stronger accountability)
- Message: Schools can't wait until 2030—alignment starts now – there are some important cautions: ambition is good, but the detail matters

Inclusion by Design

- Mainstream as the default
 - SEND support built into curriculum, teaching, behaviour and leadership
 - Not bolt-on, not “SEND corners”
- Message: “What would a pupil with SEND reliably experience in any classroom?”

Re-energising Graduated Response

- Assess–Plan–Do–Review is back at the centre
 - - High-quality assessment
 - - Co-produced plans
 - - Consistent classroom implementation
 - - Evidence-based review
- Message: The Graduated Response is the engine of improvement and the evidence base for escalation.
- But what about those with more severe and persistent needs that do not respond to inclusive classroom practice?

Universal → Targeted → Targeted Plus

- Tiered model only works if **each layer is clearly defined**

- **Universal:**

- High-quality teaching of reading, writing and maths
- Early screening for literacy and numeracy difficulties
- Staff understanding of developmental components
- This capability **does not currently exist in most schools**

- **Targeted:**

- Specialist-oversight interventions
- Structured and evidence-based
- Strong collaboration with parents

- **Targeted Plus:**

- Trigger specialist assessment when difficulties persist
- National inconsistency: only **3 of 152 LAs** can report dyslexic pupil numbers

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Persistent literacy difficulties strongly linked to:
 - anxiety
 - low self-esteem
 - school avoidance
- SASC cites BDA findings:
 - *“7 in 10 say dyslexia has made them feel bad about themselves”*
 - *“6 in 10 hide their dyslexia”*
- Emotional impact often hidden until difficulties become severe
- Early identification acts as a **protective factor** for wellbeing
- Timely support reduces escalation into mental health difficulties

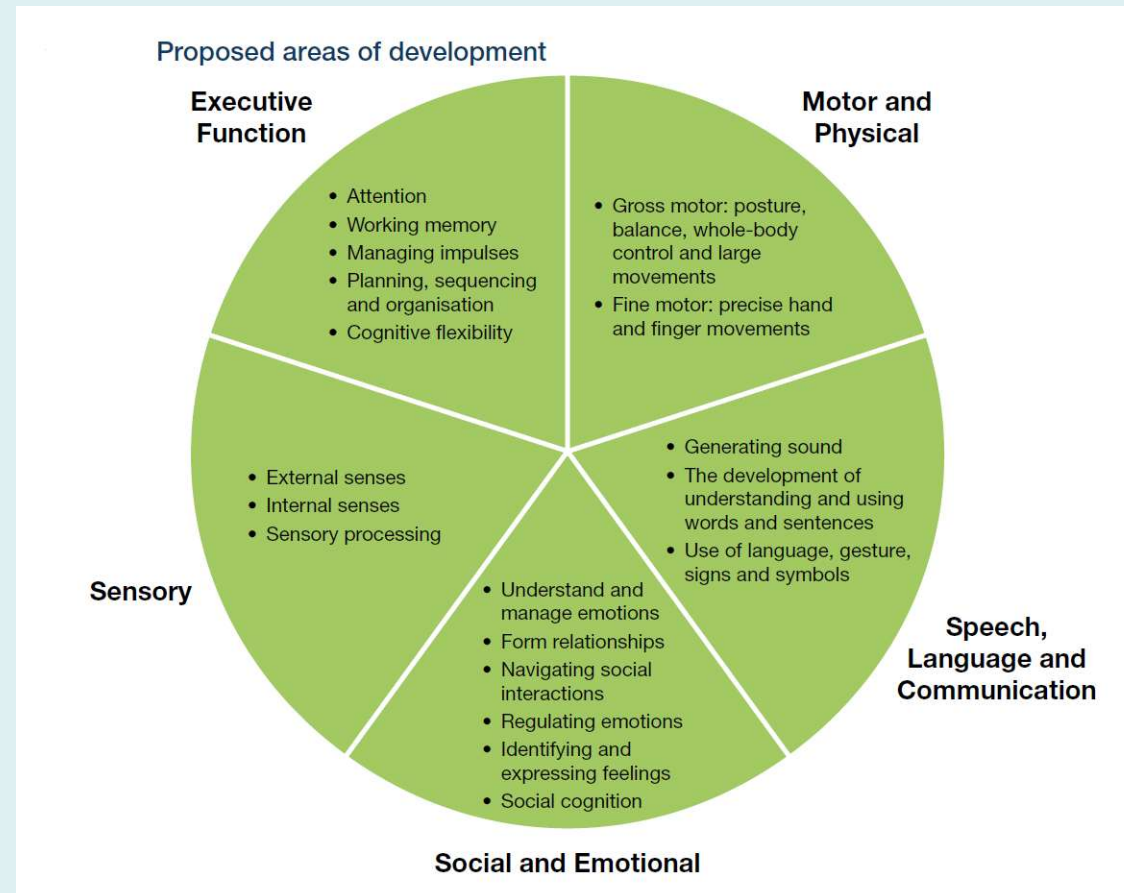
Rights, Safeguards & Risks

- Standardised SPPs may not meet individual needs; ISPs lack EHCP enforceability
- EHCP thresholds and tribunal powers become restricted, weakening challenge routes
- Risk of widening inequity as needs are often recognised only when parents pay privately

Message: Legal rights do not need to change, resources need to meet learner needs

Central Concern: Cognition and Learning Must Be Reinstated

- Proposed framework **fails to recognise persistent literacy and numeracy difficulties**
- These difficulties *“do not map cleanly onto any of the proposed areas”*
- Risk of needs being **misallocated to behavioural, sensory or communication categories**
- Misallocation leads to **inappropriate intervention and delayed support**



Specialist Layer & Inclusion Bases

- Specialist layer must **guarantee access to diagnostic assessment** for dyslexia and dyscalculia
- “Experts at Hand” must **expand specialist supply**, not pull existing specialists from statutory duties
- Inclusion Bases need **literacy and numeracy specialists** or they risk becoming behaviour-focused rather than needs-focused

Responding to the Schools White Paper

Implications from the ground

Context and changes



Our role as assessors

Listening... and acting

We'll consider...



Implications for...

1. Local authorities
2. Schools & SENDCOs
3. Families

And what assessors can do.

Advice & recommendations (reports)
Communications
Co-production

Now is the time

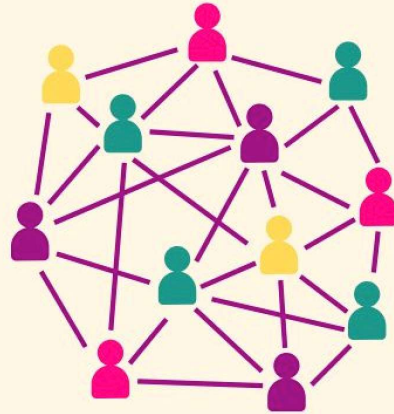
Be indispensable
as an expert.



Be on hand for
your schools.

1. Local authorities

Local Authority SpLD Advisory Teachers Network



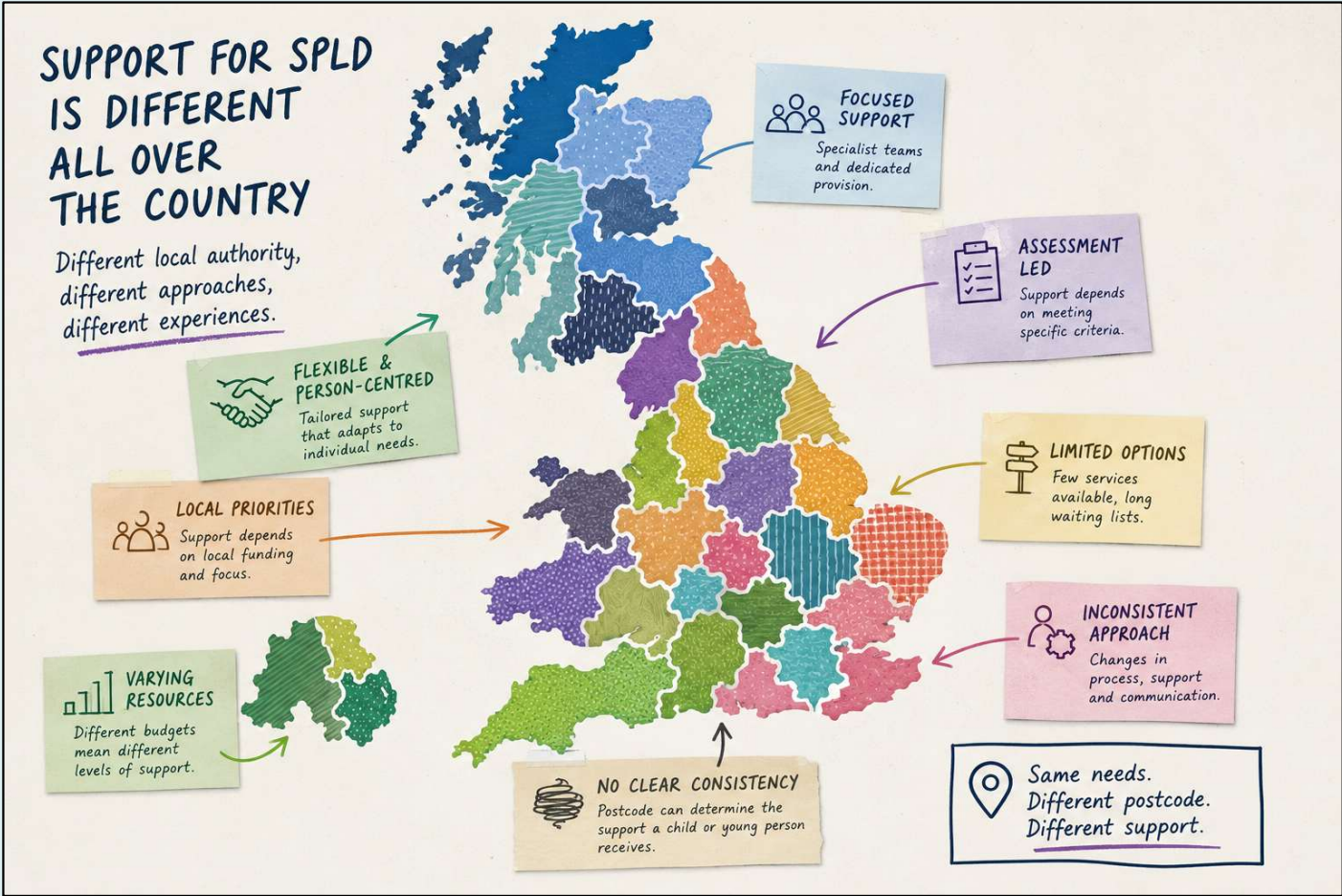
A group of advisory teachers employed by local authorities to work at county level in an advisory capacity for either cognition and learning or SpLD. All in this role are welcome: get in touch (email on final slide).

Some offer assessment, others focus on training.

Some recognize and identify dyslexia or dyscalculia, some do not.

Some are “cognition and learning” advisors, some are Spld advisors.

Some work with children – some do not.

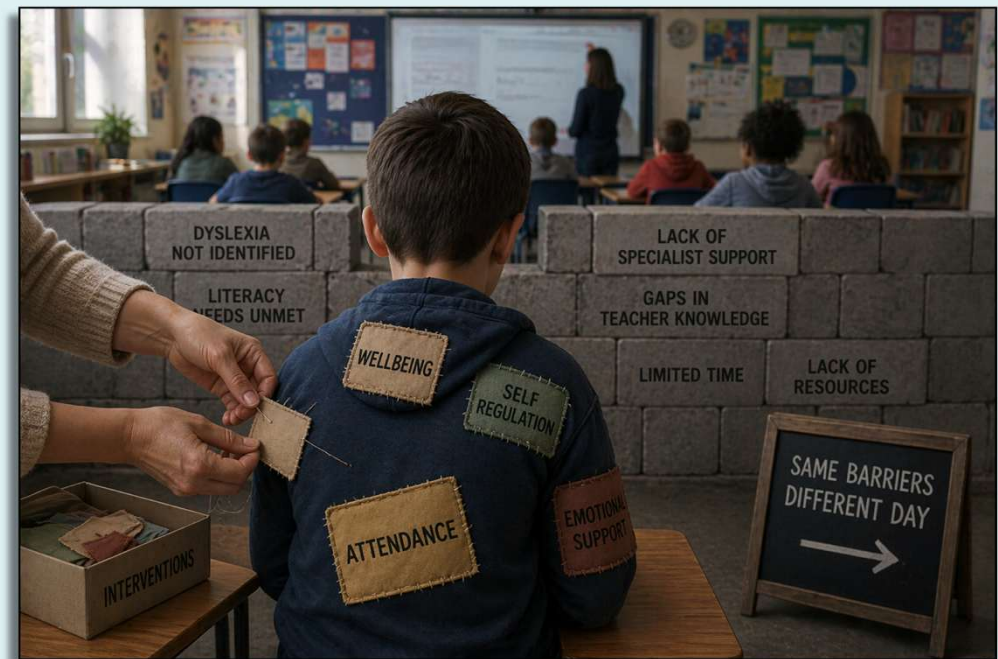


Some promote interventions, a few do not.

Vicious cycle of unmet need

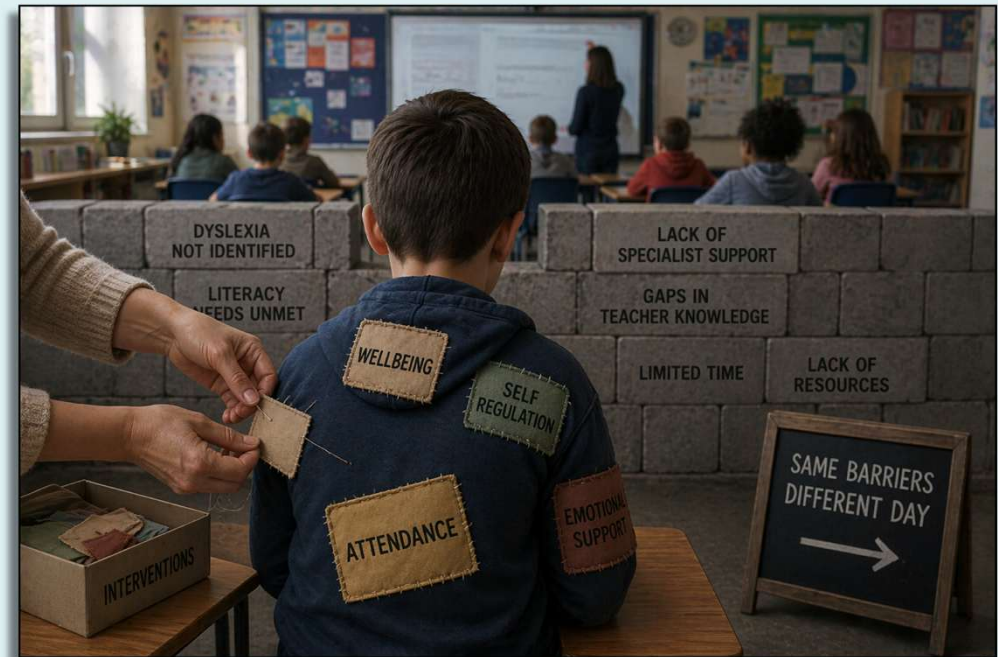
Misguided priorities:
Wellbeing/behaviour/pastoral support is more commonly implemented than learning support, where there are usually unmet learning needs.

We patch them up, put them back into the classroom, and they still face the same barriers. *(LA advisory teacher)*



Vicious cycle of unmet need

I am finding time and time again that the emphasis is being laid at the door of autism and ADHD, and there is so much training out there around autism, sensory overwhelm, and burnout, which is needed, but it's actually learning needs which seem to be the fundamental barrier for these children. Good quality advice from SEND specialists around literacy and numeracy teaching is now almost entirely absent. *(Educational Psychologist)*



Two tier system

Inequity: Children in families who can pay for assessment, and/or have advocacy skills, are more likely to get appropriate support. What about those who don't?



Where is the research?

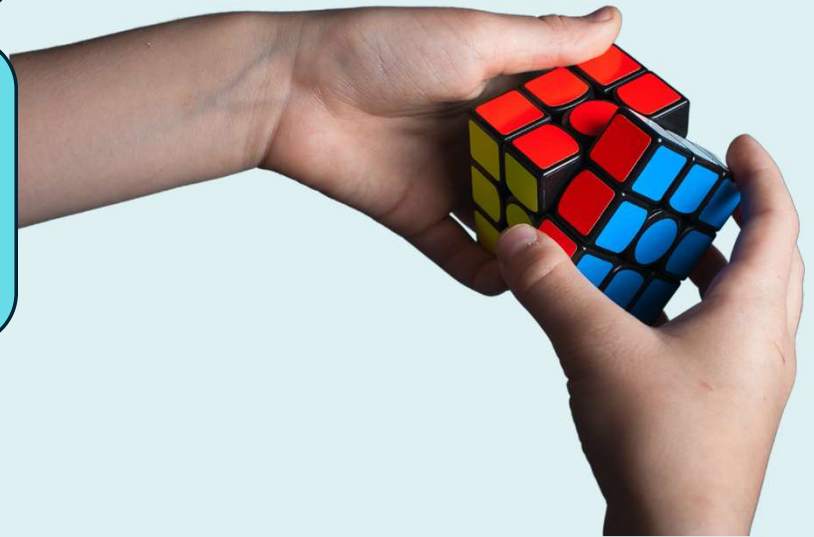
Research not applied in schools: Concerns that research into dyslexia (Delphi study) and Maths Spld (SASC Maths working group) is not translating into government policy, local authority priorities and schools.



What assessors can do

Talk regularly about the “evidence base” of Delphi/SASC Maths research and offer accessible explanations in your reports and conversations. What does it mean in practice?

Find out what the local authority (or trust) already offers (training & resources) and link to that in our recommendations. If there is more to add, state explicitly what is needed in addition.



2. Schools

New Ofsted framework & inclusive standards mean that inclusion is expected to be more central, a leadership priority owned by the whole school community.



Rome wasn't built in a day!



Leading on whole school inclusive culture is not straightforward.

Evolving priorities – opportunity for all

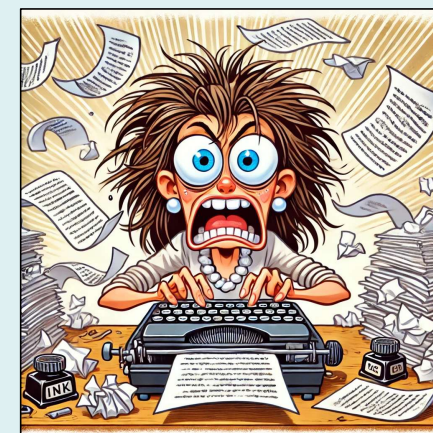
Strong focus on broad, balanced curriculum, enrichment & belonging – with an Ofsted focus on SEND

Belonging “The extent to which pupils feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment.” (National Children’s Bureau, 2024). Does this include learning?



A time of transition

Many SENCOs are exhausted, demoralized and leaving the profession for the sake of their mental health.



The role will grow! But SEND training starts now, liaising with experts at hand takes time.

What did SENCOs say about us (2024)?

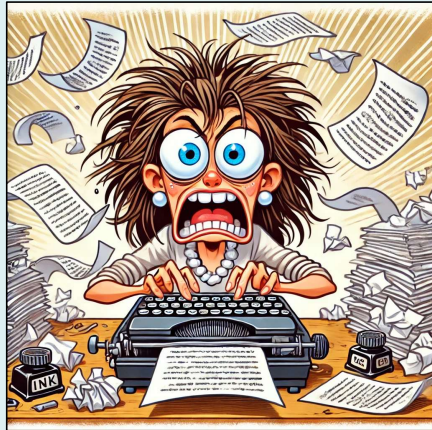


The best assessors collaborate, acknowledge what we are doing and understand the context. They respond to changing needs in our setting as well as the individual needs of the child.



The assessment process can sometimes feel as if the assessor sides with the parents. They give parents ammunition to make unrealistic demands.

What did SENCOs say about us (2024)?



We prefer recommendations of what to do, and strategies to use rather than long lists of programmes.

Recommendations are most useful when they describe quality first teaching and least useful when they require expensive resources we cannot access.

It's not about the diagnosis – it's about the strategies.

What assessors can do

Support our schools, especially SENCOs. Use feedback meetings.

Use background questionnaires to inform recommendations about belonging, school culture and training needs.



Make recommendations that will develop school expertise in inclusive practice.

Be explicit in our reports about what training is needed.

Background questionnaires

Parent

Does your child feel they belong in school?



School

What are your current whole school priorities?

Do you feel pupils and staff at your school have a good understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity and difference? Any areas to develop?

Please comment on the child's participation in wider school life and extra-curricular activities?

Is there anything you would like to understand from this assessment? Is there anything you'd particularly like advice on?

3. Parents & families



There is now (in theory) a strong focus on co-production, family engagement, enrichment, home school partnership

Responsive fear & concern regarding EHCPs & legal rights

Accountability & complaints will change significantly if the proposals go through.

There has already been a growth in AI complaints – is there a developing distrust between schools and parents?

What assessors can do



Consider what the needs of the parents are. Do they need support/training themselves? Or do they have expertise to offer school? Reflect this in our recommendations (sensitively and with consent).

Consider the parents' current relationship with school. Are there any communication gaps between parents and school that need addressing? How can our reports support co-production between parents and school, with ourselves as experts ?

Now is the time

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You can still respond!

Write to your MP

Talk to parents & schools

Talk to each other

Engage!



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