SEN POLICY RESEARCH FORUM

A worthwhile investment?

Assessing and valuing educational outcomes for children and young people with SEND

December 2017

SUMMARY

This seminar addressed questions about what sorts of educational outcomes are relevant and appropriate, how can these be assessed, how can we ensure they are properly valued and what implications are there for the ways in which the educational performance of schools, settings and services is judged?

Professor Graeme Douglas (Birmingham University) discusses inclusive assessment dilemmas and how to address them. He understood inclusive assessment in terms of being inclusive in terms of who is assessed, how they are assessed and what is assessed. This implied an inclusive assessment framework that should: (1) include all, (2) be accessible and appropriate and (3) assess areas of relevance, based on an international study of inclusive assessment policies and practices. He considers various approaches including ways to contextualise international and national assessment data and raising the question of whether Ofsted inspection framework reinforces the problems.

Graham Easterlow (National Education Union Joint Executive Council) then discusses assessment issues from an special school perspective. He explains how a residential specialist SEN school uses a holistic model that covers all the different aspects of being a person to create educational outcomes that are personally relevant. Assessments involve setting a baseline to monitor progress. He asks in conclusion whether ordinary schools can meet the needs of complex SEND learners if they are under-resourced.

In the first round of discussion groups the common themes are about why are we assessing children and young people? Many participants believe that the purpose was to inform the teaching and learning. Though accountability is also seen as legitimate, but it needs to be more nuanced and flexible. Assessment should also be focussed beyond the academic core subjects and cover a greater breadth. Some participants are also concerned that age-related expectations put some children into a permanent state of failure.

Dr Jean Ware (Bangor University) then examines assessment issues for children and young people with significant / complex learning difficulties. She argues based on an overview of recent policy and practice in this field for assessment policy that ensures that what is assessed is what matters most, for moderation within and between settings and for the data collected to be used to inform teaching and learning.

Finally, Anne Heavey (ATL) examines accountability issues and their implications for children and young people with SEN and disabilities. She argues that current school level performance measures undermine inclusion prevent providing parents with meaningful information. Despite the promising Local Authority SEND inspections, she argues that Ofsted is not performing well enough. She concludes that accountability measures need to give voice to the real experiences of children and young people with SEND.

Participants in the second and final round of discussion groups focussed on a range of key points. The negative effects of overarching policy and the accountability system as it operates, is a theme in several groups. For one group the accountability measures are not supporting positive responses to diversity. For many the assessment system is also not informing those with a direct stake in it, such as parents. For others, the tension between developmentally determined educational needs and chronologically determined accountability is not addressed enough nor being resolved. Linked to this is the question of how assessment can meet a social justice model and not just an economic one. In other words, is assessment primarily about realising workforce potential rather than improving social and educational outcomes. A linked concern is expressed in terms of whether it is possible to answer questions about assessing schools and assessing children and young people? It is suggested that this cannot be done with a single tool. Continuing Professional Development that values collaboration, peer review, self-evaluation and exchange placements is also seen as contributing to improved assessment practices.

CONTENTS

Section 1: Introduction

This whole day policy seminar took place on 22 June 2017, St Albans Centre, Leigh Place, Baldwin's Gardens, London EC1N 7AB with about 45 participants.

Topic:

A worthwhile investment? Assessing and valuing educational outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The seminar addressed these questions and others that emerged:
1. What sorts of outcomes are relevant and appropriate?
2. How can these be assessed?
3. How can we ensure they are properly valued?
4. What implications are there for the ways in which the educational performance of schools, settings and services is judged?

The presenters were:
1. Professor Graham Douglas, Birmingham University on Inclusive assessment dilemmas: how to address them
2. Graham Easterlow, National Education Union Joint Executive Council on Assessment issues: from an ordinary-special school perspective.
3. Dr Jean Ware, Bangor University on Assessment issues for children and young people with significant/complex learning difficulties
Anne Heavey ATL on Accountability and implications for SEND.

SEN Policy Research Forum
The SEN Policy Research Forum, which organised this seminar, incorporates the aims and work of the previous SEN Policy Options group in a new format and with some expanded aims. The Forum's website is at:

http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/sen-policyforum/

The aim of the Forum is to contribute intelligent analysis, knowledge and experience to promote the development of policy and practice for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The Forum will be concerned with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities from preschool to post 16. It will cover the whole of the UK and aim to:
1. provide timely policy review and critique,
2. promote intelligent policy debate,
3. help set longer term agendas – acting like a think-tank,
4. deliberate over and examine policy options in the field.
5. inform research and development work in the field.
6. contribute to development of more informed media coverage of SEND policy issues.

The uncertainties over what counts as 'special educational needs' and 'disabilities' in relation to a wider concept of 'additional needs' are recognised. These will be among the many issues examined through the Forum.

The Forum, which continues the work of the SEN Policy Options group has been

continuing this work for over 20 years. It started as an ESRC seminar series with some initial funding from the Cadbury Trust. The Forum appreciates the generous funding from NASEN and the Pears Foundation to enable it to function, though it operates independently of these organisations.

Lead group and coordination of the Forum:
Dr Peter Gray - Policy Consultant (co-coordinator)
Professor Brahm Norwich - University of Exeter (co-cordinator)
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Linda Redford - Policy Consultant
Penny Richardson - Policy Consultant
Chris Robertson, University of Birmingham
Professor Klaus Wedell - Institute of Education, University of London

Membership:
If you would like to join the Forum, go to the website and follow link to registering as a member. You will be invited to future seminars and be able to participate in discussion through the Jiscmail system. SEE SENPRF website for joining instructions.

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Past Policy Options Papers (see website for downloadable copies)
1. Bucking the market: Peter Housden, Chief Education Officer, Nottinghamshire LEA
2. Towards effective schools for all: Mel Ainscow, Cambridge University Institute of Education
3. Teacher education for special educational needs: Professor Peter Mittler, Manchester University
4. Resourcing for SEN: Jennifer Evans and Ingrid Lunt, Institute of Education, London University
5. Special schools and their alternatives: Max Hunt, Director of Education, Stockport LEA
6. Meeting SEN: options for partnership between health, education and social services: Tony Dessent, Senior Assistant Director, Nottinghamshire LEA
7. SEN in the 1990s: users' perspectives: Micheline Mason, Robina Mallet, Colin Low and Philippa Russell
8. Independence and dependence? Responsibilities for SEN in the Unitary and County Authorities: Roy Atkinson, Michael Peters, Derek Jones, Simon Gardner and Phillipa Russell
9. Inclusion or exclusion: Educational Policy and Practice for Children and Young People with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: John Bangs, Peter Gray and Greg Richardson
9. Baseline Assessment and SEN: Geoff Lindsay, Max Hunt, Sheila Wolfendale,

35. Preparing for adulthood - developing provision for children and young people with SEND. Yolande Burgess Justin Cooke. Ellen Atkinson and Gill Waceba.

Copies of most of these papers can now be downloaded from the website of the SEN Policy Research Forum http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/sen-policyforum/

Section 2:
Inclusive assessment dilemmas: how to address them
Graeme Douglas

Introduction
Assessment of young people's educational progress and outcomes is a central aspect of an educational system. As with any part of the educational system, it is important to reflect upon how well it operates and how well it serves all the young people it should benefit. This paper defines an *inclusive assessment framework,* that proposes all pupils should be included in assessment on one hand, while also ensuring the assessment is appropriate and relevant to those pupils on the other. The inclusive assessment framework is used as a lens to analyse some international and national assessment practices, which have such a prominent role in the educational landscape of most industrialised countries (Allan and Artiles, 2017). The analysis particularly highlights concern around a narrowing of the curriculum – which has an impact upon all pupils, but perhaps particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Defining inclusive assessment
This article is concerned with how students with special educational needs and disability (SEND) are included in approaches to national assessment and draws upon previous work (Douglas et al., 2012; Douglas et al., 2016). The original review was commissioned by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in Ireland and posed the question: how should we measure the progress and outcomes of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)? However, it is deceptively complex because, in reality, it encompasses three separate questions:

- *who* are we interested in? – which is linked to definitions and categorisations of young people;
- *how* do we undertake assessment? – which is linked to assessment methods;
- *what* should we assess? – which is linked to the curriculum.

Each question is important, but it is arguably the link with the curriculum that is fundamental as it defines what we consider the most important educational outcomes – that is, what we think our educational system is for?

At the heart of these questions is the concept of 'inclusive education'. Norwich (2013, p. 3) notes the complexity and ambiguity of the definitions of inclusive education present in the literature. Even so, his analysis drew out particular areas of dilemma: identification-non-identification of some children having SEND; curriculum commonality-differentiation ('inclusive curriculum'); common-separate teaching ('inclusive pedagogy'); and common-separate learning settings ('inclusive schooling').

It seems to naturally follow that the analysis should extend to common-separate assessment procedures, i.e. 'inclusive assessment' (e.g. Watkins, 2007). Following the question structure offered above, I now consider the *who*, *how* and *what* of inclusive assessment.

Who is assessed?
Watkins (2007) notes, "The overall goal of inclusive assessment is that all assessment policies and procedures should support and enhance the successful inclusion and participation of all pupils vulnerable to exclusion, including those with [SEND]" (p. 47). Therefore, a central theme of inclusive assessment is the inclusion of *all* children in assessment practice, in line with the spirit of international declarations (e.g. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, under Articles 7 and 24) and national declarations (e.g. Equality Act (UK), and IDEA (US)).

How they are assessed?
There is a rich literature associated with modifying assessments to accommodate a diverse range of pupils. Greenen and Ysseldyke (1997) provided an early analysis of the inclusion of students with SEND in national assessment. Adjusting their vocabulary to include more recent literature, the following approaches can be taken:

- *Total exclusion:* assessment does not take place for these students.
- *Alternative systems:* alternative assessments are developed to include students with SEND. An alternative assessment approach aims to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their ability, can be assessed appropriately by creating a range of assessments with different assessment criteria. The use of the P-Scales in the UK is an example of an alternative assessment.
- *Accommodated systems:* assessment can be modified to include students with SEND. Modifications, or accommodations, are required because standard assessment formats and procedures can present barriers to pupils with SEND, which means they may not be able to demonstrate their abilities under normal assessment conditions. These assessment accommodations seek to make an assessment accessible while maintaining the same assessment criteria (e.g. Hopper, 2001; QCA, 2007). Accommodations can take various forms, e.g. in relation to assessment presentation, response method, setting and scheduling (Hopper, 2001).
- *Universally designed systems*: a single assessment method is suitable for all students. The approach argues that careful attention to assessment design will include all and reduce the need for accommodated and alternative versions (e.g. Lazarus et al., 2009). This seems an important aspiration; however, we could not find any examples of universally designed national assessments that include all.

What is assessed?
Watkins (2007) also highlights that inclusive assessment "should aim to 'celebrate' diversity by identifying and valuing all pupils' individual learning progress and achievements" (p. 48) and that "a wide range of assessment methods are necessary in inclusive assessment in order to make sure that there is a wide coverage of areas (non-academic as well as academic subjects) assessed" (p. 49).

This relationship between assessment and curriculum is crucial here, but defining what should be universally assessed is somewhat difficult because curricula are often defined nationally. As an example, England defines a National Curriculum (e.g. DfE, 2014), but broader educational policy makes reference to schools being required to provide a *broad and balanced curriculum*, which attends to wider educational outcomes: "(a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and (b) prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life" (Education Act, 2002. Part 6:78). The SEND legislation also cross references the importance of a "broad and balanced curriculum" (e.g. DfES, 2001; DfE, 2015).

Looking more internationally, Douglas et al., (2016) found that while there are many ways of conceptualising these different educational outcomes, a useful distinction is between "attainment-related" outcomes (commonly concerned with traditional curriculum areas) and "wider curriculum-related" outcomes (commonly concerned with wellbeing and independence). Perhaps unsurprisingly, we also found that system-based data collection commonly focuses on attainment-related outcomes regarding specific parts of the curriculum (especially literacy, numeracy and science). A concern then is that assessments should reflect the full breadth of a curriculum, rather than just part of it.

Norwich (2013, pp. 63-65) describes the "common versus differentiated curriculum tension" in inclusive education. A differentiated curriculum might include terms like expanded, additional or even alternative curricula. Here the interest is in the teaching of specific skills seen as important to pupils with SEND (e.g. mobility for children with visual impairment, social skills to children with autism, independent-living skills for children with learning disabilities), and as such may warrant particular assessment and monitoring. The debate about the relevance and breadth of the curriculum continues. For example, in their polemic book *Inclusion is dead: long live inclusion*, Imray and Colley (2017) argue that the National Curriculum in England is inappropriate for some children. Lawson (2017) sums up the tension neatly:

> As a society we have 'agreed' that there are certain areas of knowledge, certain ways of thinking which are important for our young people to learn/participate in. We want all children to have access to these. Yet we also want curriculum to be needs-led and individually personalised.

Figure 1: Inclusive Assessment Framework
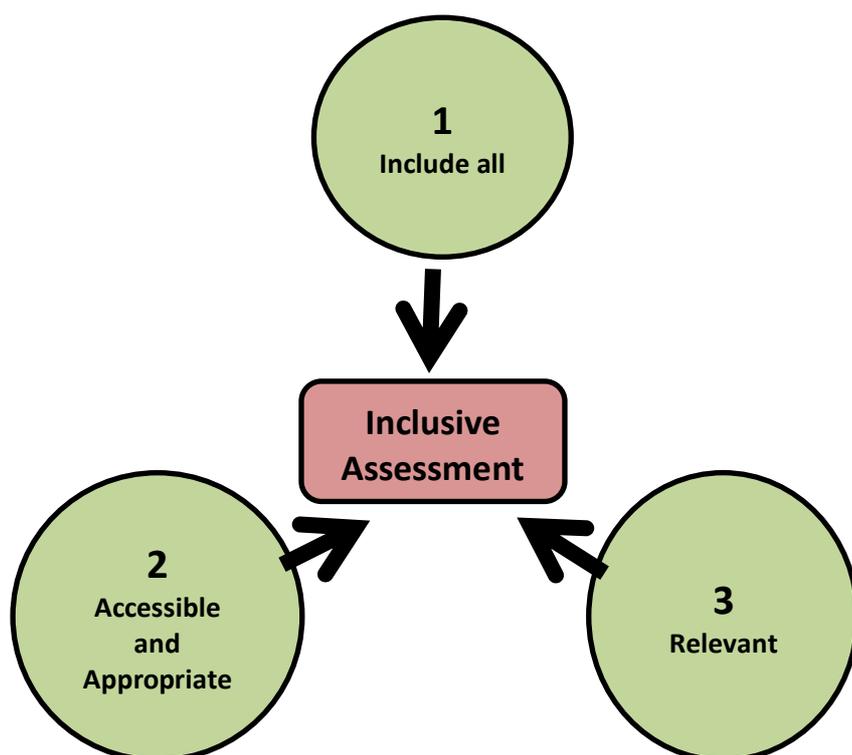
In summary, inclusive assessment is seeking to be inclusive in relation to 'who is assessed', 'how they are assessed' and 'what is assessed'. The proposed inclusive assessment framework incorporates these three features (see Figure 1). Assessment should: (1) include all, (2) be accessible and appropriate and (3) assess areas of relevance. While such a framework provides a lens through which to analyse different assessment systems, it also captures some of the tensions between the different features – the pulling and pushing, and the dilemmas that must be overcome. This is what I explore in the next sections – first in relation to international assessments and then national assessments.

International agendas and assessment

> Recent international assessments, comparing the performance of our young people in 2011/2012 with their international peers, have shown that our education standards have remained static, at best, whilst other countries have moved ahead. (DfE, 2016, p. 3)

The above quote is from the forward of Educational Excellence Everywhere (DfE, 2016) written by the then Conservative Party Secretary of State for Education. This anxiety about international performance is not new in the UK (e.g. DfE, 2010, p. 3), and similar patterns are observed internationally (e.g. Orfield, 2000). The

international comparisons (and associated anxiety) are commonly based upon assessments undertaken by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and include the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Given their influence, it is interesting to reflect upon how inclusive these assessments are using the framework described above.

PISA comprises a series of assessments and questionnaires completed by 15-year-old students. They are designed to "assess student performance and collect data on the student, family and institutional factors that can help explain differences in performance" (OECD 2001, p. 4) and students are assessed in three subject domains in three-yearly cycles: reading, mathematics and science. The first wave of PISA took place in 2000, and focused mainly on reading. In 2012 PISA focused upon mathematics; around 510,000 students from 65 countries and economies took part. While PISA also gathers other data, it is the assessment performance data that is often the focus of news headlines and receives the attention of government and policy makers.

Turning our attention to an analysis of the inclusivity of the assessment (Smith and Douglas, 2014; 2017). PISA is typically administered to a sample of between 4,500 and 10,000 students in each country/economy. Students take pencil-and-paper tests, which last a total of two hours. Test items are a mixture of multiple-choice items and questions requiring students to construct their own responses. PISA does not emphasise the taught curriculum. The test designers argue that PISA does not focus on the taught, as this would give an assessment that was "too narrow to be of value for governments wishing to learn about the strengths and innovations in the education systems of other countries" (OECD 2009, p. 12). Even so, the assessments clearly focus upon a relatively narrow set of attainment-related outcomes.

Smith and Douglas (2017) provide a more detailed analysis of how children with SEND are included in PISA and raise concerns about the accessibility and breadth of the test. Indeed, OECD note that while the physical and academic inclusion of students with SEND in schools and classrooms has steadily increased, their inclusion in this sort of standardised assessment has not kept pace (OECD 2007). The OECD have made significant efforts to develop definitions for the inclusion and exclusion criteria for sampling (OECD 2008, 2014), but this is both complex and involves the conflation of 'intellectual disability', 'functional disability' *and* 'students with insufficient assessment language experience' (see Smith and Douglas, 2017). For the purposes of this paper it is useful to focus upon the numbers of students with SEND included (see Table 1).

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion rates of SEND students (%s) in PISA 2009, selected countries. Countries ordered by average performance in reading (highest first); inclusion / exclusion calculations made using weighted data

Country	Within school exclusion rate	Within school inclusion rate	Proportion of sample with SEND
Countries significantly above OECD average			
Shanghai-China**	0.13	0.52	0.6
Korea**	0.28	0.49	0.8
Finland	1.15	4.46	5.6
Hong Kong-China**	0.16	0.70	0.9
Singapore**	0.80	1.13	1.9
Canada	5.47	0.66	6.1
New Zealand	3.15	2.26	5.4
Japan**	0.00	0	0
Australia	1.79	2.39	4.2
Netherlands**	0.35	1.10	1.5
Belgium	0.24	7.61	7.9
Norway	3.79	1.87	5.7
Iceland	4.10	6.52	10.6
Countries not significantly different from OECD average			
France	0.04	3.53	3.6
Germany	0.47	1.72	2.2
Ireland	2.75	3.85	6.6
Sweden	2.89	5.59	8.5
United Kingdom*	2.44	-	-
United States	4.81	4.77	9.6

*No data available for SEND inclusions
** Countries that have a sample with a proportion of less than 2% with SEND
Source: OECD 2010 tables A2.1, A2.2, figure I.2.29; plus Smith and Douglas (2014, 2017)

Building on the analysis of Smith and Douglas (2017), Table 1 shows some countries that performed significantly above the OECD average in reading performance also have low proportions of the sample with SEND (less than 2%). This includes the Netherlands, but also countries from East Asia (Shanghai-China, Korea, Hong Kong-China, Singapore and Japan) – countries which continue to be identified as being the most successful in international league tables (e.g. Boylan, 2016), and countries we need to "catch up" with (DfE, 2010).

In part, the analysis reveals that PISA 2009 clearly faces challenges in relation to the inclusion of children with SEND. In itself, this is in common with many assessment procedures, particularly those which involve national samples and have targeted and narrow topics of interest. Nevertheless, the challenge here is these international assessments are used to make national comparisons when definitions and inclusion/exclusion criteria appear to be applied differently. As noted, these national comparisons can have far reaching consequences.

National assessments: standard-based education agendas in the US and England
Now I consider inclusive assessment at the national level – here the focus is upon the national assessments in the US and England. The standards-based education approach adopted in England and the US has an associated culture of national testing. The drive behind this policy is that by assessing pupil progress against national educational standards at various points during their school career, the generated data can be used to: inform teaching; hold schools to account for their teaching; and inform parents to make choices about the best school for their children (see Smith and Douglas, 2014; 2017). National assessments in England are the standard attainment tests (SATS) and GCSEs, while in the US 'standardised assessments' are implemented at state level.

An important feature of this agenda is that all pupils should be included in these national assessments. In fact, in both countries there is a requirement to gather data in relation to SEND and offer reports about the progress of these pupils as an additional and separate analysis (see, for example, DfE, 2014; Altman et al., 2010). In England (and the UK more generally) the national assessments are also linked to the creation of the National Pupil Database (NPD), which gathers data on student characteristics (including details of SEND), school characteristics, attainment and attendance (e.g. for a relevant overview see Florian, Rouse, Black-Hawkins & Jull, 2004).

The inclusion of all (or most) pupils in national assessments is an impressive technical achievement – after all, both countries have implemented accommodated and alternative versions of assessments in order to include all pupils. In terms of alternative assessment, P scales were introduced in 1998 to enable schools in England to measure the attainment and progress of children whose attainment levels could not be recorded through English national curriculum scales (Ndaji & Tymms, 2009). The US has invested enormously in the development of alternative

assessments ('alternate assessments' in the US) – Cameto et al. (2009) report on how each state has developed its own range of alternative assessments in order to include all children in national assessments.

The financial investment in national assessment design and implementation in England and the US has been enormous (e.g. Elliot, Kettler & Roach, 2008). While the development of accommodated and alternative versions of these assessments (especially in the US) has been a significant technical challenge and achievement, there are critiques of the efficacy of these assessment approaches. The Rochford review in England concluded the P scales were not fit for this assessment purpose (Standards and Testing Agency, 2016); the DfE have since reduced their use. Even so, the national assessment strategies in the US and England reflect many of the principles of inclusive assessment, most notably the systems are equitable in intent because all children, including those with SEND, are included. To this extent the 'who' and 'how' aspects of the inclusive assessment framework are attended to.

The third feature of the inclusive assessment framework is in relation to breath and relevance. The focus of national assessments in both the England and US – and this is true in most countries – is around attainment-related outcomes, and in particular linked to maths, literacy and science. While these curriculum areas are of course very important for all young people, they do not reflect all aspects of the curriculum; in particular wider curriculum-related outcomes (commonly concerned with wellbeing and independence). Both countries collect some national data in relation to attendance (in England) and some data on employment outcomes and disability (linked to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the US), but it is limited. Beyond this, assessment data in relation to broader educational outcomes is either collected through project work or at classroom/individual level. Some of the project work involves very impressive national studies (e.g. the US-based longitudinal study of people with disabilities, NLTS2). In England, some studies also link broader outcome data to the NPD to provide powerful analyses. For example, in the evaluation work undertaken by Humphrey and Squires (2011), the authors drew on attainment and attendance data already collected as part of England's national assessment programme and recorded within the NPD. They combined this with other broader measures of pupil progress collected as part of the evaluation (e.g. developing positive relationships with others; increasing participation in extended services provision, including extra-curricular activities). This is extraordinarily efficient and powerful, but the data is not collected for national assessment purposes, nor is it used in the same way (i.e. for accountability and monitoring).

Similarly, classroom and individual level assessment is valuable, and in the case of children with SEND may be linked to an individual's education plan. Valuable though this is, the progress individuals may make (or indeed patterns of success or failure in a given school) in relation to this wider curriculum is not collated nationally or reflected in school league tables.

Inclusive assessment and competing agendas

The National Council on Disability (NCD) in the US undertook a review of the inclusion of young people with SEND in national assessments. The review was positive, noting that the policy "had a significant positive impact". (NCD, 2008, p. 1). They went on to note:

> People teach what is tested and who is tested – so now that students with disabilities are included in the accountability system, they are being taught (NCD, 2008, p. 55).

Captured within this fascinating quote is a very important dilemma in relation to assessment and curriculum: on one hand, inclusion in the assessment (and the associated accountability) ensures that pupils receive attention from teachers; on the other hand, the teaching will focus upon the curriculum that is being assessed.

Unsurprisingly, there has been significant concerns that have been raised about potential negative consequences of national assessments which are used for accountability purposes. After all, such assessments are not only high stakes to the pupils, but also to the teacher and school – an impact on the school (e.g. league table position in England, potential funding in the US) or the teacher (e.g. disciplinary action or promotion opportunities). Cole (2006) describes how students with SEND might be treated as scapegoats by schools who might attribute poor school performance in national assessments to them. This has a potential impact on inclusion of students with SEND – at times of registration in the school, day-to-day inclusion in classes, and exclusion / dropout rates from the school.

Of particular relevance to this discussion, however, are the concerns raised about the narrowing of the curriculum and related accusations of teachers teaching to the test (see Darling-Hammond, 2007). Lowrey et al. (2007) highlight a concern that the focus upon the national assessments for students with severe learning disabilities may be at the expense of other "meaningful targets that will improve a student's quality of life after leaving the public school system" (p. 251). Galton and MacBeath (2015) make similar observations in their recent review of SEND provision in England and their recommendations call for the reinstatement of broader curriculum provision (pp. 13-14).

England's current policy context provides a fascinating example of how different policy agendas can place conflicting pressures upon what is valued in a given country in terms of educational outcomes. While concerns are raised around the narrowing of the curriculum as a result of national assessments associated with standards-based policies, new SEND policies emphasise a broader concern for independence as a crucial educational outcome.

England has recently undergone some significant policy changes in relation to the SEND legislation and associated codes of practice (CoP) that offer statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people

who have SEND. This is visibly illustrated in the changes from the 2001 SEN CoP (DfES, 2001) to the 2015 SEND CoP (DfE, 2015). Some are very significant, perhaps most obviously the extension in the legislation to include young people up to the age of 25 years in the 2015 CoP. Unsurprisingly, this has had a profound impact upon the feel and language of the 2015 CoP, and of relevance to the current discussion is the shift to a focus upon educational outcomes, which include wider curriculum-related outcomes including independence. Table 2 shows the shift in focus of language towards a requirement for services to maximise young people's *independence* (e.g. "increased focus on life outcomes, including employment and greater independence", "promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people and parents" and "successful preparation for adulthood, including independent living and employment").

Table 2: Occurrences of references to independence (as an educational outcome), curriculum and (educational) outcome in the SEN CoP (DfES, 2001) and the SEND CoP (DfE, 2015)

Word/meaning	CoP 2001	CoP 2015
Independence/independent as an educational outcome	3	54
Curriculum/curricular	125	25
Outcome (for the young person)	17	221
Page length	142 pages	292 pages

This shift in emphasis appears a positive counter position to the concerns raised about the narrowing of the curriculum associated with national assessment. To this extent, the SEND legislation in England as captured in the latest 2015 CoP has a protective function, reminding stakeholders of the broader outcomes to which education must attend. In line with this is the increased occurrence of the word 'outcome'. The 2015 CoP makes many references to the idea of educational and broader outcomes (e.g. "Improving outcomes: high aspirations and expectations for children and young people with SEN", (p. 90); long-term outcomes; agreed outcome; desired outcomes; good outcomes). In contrast, the 2001 CoP makes very few similar references. Nevertheless, surprisingly given this greater concern for wider curriculum-related *outcomes*, there is very little reference to the curriculum itself in the 2015 CoP. In contrast, the 2001 CoP makes much more direct reference to curriculum (e.g. 'curriculum access'). While the analysis is worthy of further work, it seems clear that while there is a shift in emphasis towards independence-focused outcomes in the 2015 CoP, at the same time it provides little guidance on the 'curriculum space' in which to achieve this. Given the curriculum narrowing, which is

the product of the national assessment and accountability agenda discussed earlier, the two agendas seem almost impossible to reconcile.

Moving the debate on – navigating the dilemma
In concluding this paper I want to consider how this dilemma can be challenged and navigated. The dilemma might be summed up in the following two questions:

- Does accountability associated with national testing inevitably lead to narrowing of the curriculum (and therefore threaten attention to a broad and balanced curriculum)?
- Does lack of accountability and national testing inevitably lead to the exclusion of students with SEND from assessments (and therefore threaten their inclusion in mainstream curricula)?

One radical solution might be to envisage an education system in England that assesses less, or did not use the national assessments for accountability purposes in the same way. Alternatively, we might envisage an educational system that assesses *more* – by assessing progress of children in relation to a broader range of curriculum areas, schools will give this curriculum more time (in keeping with NCD's "people teach what is tested"). Both solutions seem unlikely and ludicrous in equal measure: they would not answer the questions posed, and would most likely bring about other consequences.

Perhaps the solutions lie in how we should use and contextualise international and national assessment data, and how we seek to conceptualise the curriculum.

The interest in international comparisons is not fundamentally a problem, but it should be a healthy comparison of differences and explanations of those differences. The position the UK has in international league tables concerned with relatively narrow measures makes little sense without considering the context. The analysis above highlights the important contextual variable of SEND in interpreting international assessment data. However, there are many other variables that must be accounted for, e.g. the nature of schools and their function, multiculturalism and breadth of the curriculum. Such a critical engagement with international comparisons does not make it any less valuable – there are enormous things to be learnt from international comparison. Rather it means simple conclusions about which country is better or worse are simplistic and unhelpful.

The distinction between national and classroom assessment is very important. While national assessments do provide data to inform teaching, it is the formative and summative classroom assessments carried out by teachers that most support individual student learning (Sheil, Kellagham, & Moran, 2010). High expectations should be made of classroom assessment because it is a mechanism for monitoring progress against the whole curriculum, however this is conceptualised for a given individual. In England this includes engagement with SEND policies and procedures – e.g. Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) – to ensure the particular curriculum access requirements of children with

SEND are accounted for. National assessments cannot do this – they are too narrow in nature.

Of course, good schools do these things. Good schools attend to a broad and balanced curriculum. Good schools ensure children with SEND have access to the curriculum, whether in the form of access to the National Curriculum, extra-curricular activities or to the broader curriculum implicit in the long-term independence outcomes described in the 2015 SEND Code or Practice. It is the school's management, teachers and broad school community that make these things happen.

As well as a school's self-evaluation, a key monitoring mechanism is school inspection (in England this is OFSTED). In principle, OFSTED is a mechanism, a protective system that can help navigate the dilemmas outlined in this article. It is OFSTED that can monitor and check the curriculum is not too narrow in a given school. Analysis of the school inspection processes is beyond the remit of this paper, but there is concern that OFSTED focuses too much energy into judging school's performance data. For example, Richards (2014) noted:

> The current inspection framework has four focus points: pupils' achievement, teaching quality, leadership and management, and pupils' behaviour and safety. All but the latter are pegged on achievement measured in terms of performance data. Conspicuous by its absence as an explicit focus is the quality of the school's curriculum, its main medium for the transmission of knowledge, understanding and values.

Rather than ensuring our schools provide a broad and balanced curriculum that is supported by an overarching inclusive assessment framework, perhaps OFSTED is reinforcing the problem?

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Section 3:
Assessment issues: from an ordinary-special school perspective.
Graham Easterlow

Introduction
This presentation is coming from someone with an ordinary-special school perspective who is the leader of SEN for ATL and as someone who works at a residential SEN school for young males, mostly with ASC. I look at the SEN Code principles as shifting the focus of staff both in mainstream and in SEN specialist provision to the expression of wishes and participating in decisions. It is also about looking at other outcomes, number-based attainment, that was referred to in an earlier presentation.

Four key areas:
In relation to the Rochford Review (2016), I have distilled its key purpose into four areas that relate to the questions which guide the seminar today. The first is that 'The pupils have an opportunity to demonstrate what they've achieved'. The key word is 'demonstrate', whether that is demonstrating through the achievement of a test score or whether that is demonstrating it though a wider health outcome, or a wider personal, social outcome, which is relative to the individual. This is something to return to later. The second area is that 'Parents receiving meaningful information'. In my experience on the frontline, parent and pupil voice has never been so powerful in terms of achieving correct placements and achieving correct assessment outcomes.

I work in a unique, niche, rural independent SEN school, and whereas five years ago, the majority of placements would come direct from LA's and would be placed by them, now it is parental preference, and parental preference that is having the greatest weight. We have also seen a huge rise in the number of tribunals and attainment, achievement and outcomes have become been more important in terms of setting up those young people to achieve their life goals. This relates to the third area that 'Showing young people's progress in education over time'. The fourth area 'Making sure that schools are accountable' is very interesting in terms of accountability. For instance, when you place SEN pupils in the mainstream classroom, the authority and power goes to teachers to assess and identify SEN. I also point out that the word used in the Code is 'identify', not 'diagnose'.

In my view partnership is central to this approach to the setting of outcomes and who is involved in doing this, as was mentioned earlier. It is no longer acceptable and appropriate for us to be saying, 'well, this is the outcome we think you're going to achieve'. There is to be a dialogue, a conversation that includes pupils, the school and parents / carers' voice. The Local Authorities are to be involved here and by this I am including Health and Care, which are often missing from the dialogue. How this works for Health and Care needs to be considered, as these aspects are mainly being completed by Education. The kind of model where all are working in partnership is the driver and dream of the SEN Code of Practice.

Kinds of outcomes
What sort of outcomes are relevant and appropriate? I think from our point of view it is individual outcomes for each pupil, with the building of a package, which is designed around that individual. In my current context, we are privileged to have

much capacity. For 52 boys in the school, there are 82 staff overall; a high pupil/staff ratio. So, when we create individualised programmes with the setting of individualised outcomes, we have a great capacity to really address some of those needs. In this school a lot of the boys have been through the mainstream schools, perhaps two or three mainstream provisions, before they arrive. These are boys who are, as I say, special educational-abled rather than disabled. These are young men who may be extremely good at Maths, but if you ask them, for example, to get dressed in the morning and put their clothes on in the right order, they struggle to do that. Another might not be able to deal with the noise of a large room, so you might expect a 'meltdown' in the corner. These aspects assume significance when you are considering individual outcomes in terms of the whole person. So, I am talking from point of view of specialist provision, but I believe that some of this is transferrable to other settings and the sharing of practice.

Specialist setting

There are indications that many pupils who are gaining places in specialist settings have experienced a kind of academic trauma within their mainstream experiences. I am aware of an example of this from a Year 8 pupils, he said that he was fine in Year 7 and that he was doing well until the school turned into an Academy. He talked about changes in how they assessed behaviour through a points based system, he managed to adapt to initially. But then one day he was in the corridor with his shirt untucked. He said that he knew that he had to tuck it in. To do this he took his mobile phone out of his pocket and tucked his shirt in. A teacher who saw this gave him one point for his shirt being untucked and a point for his phone. When he tried to explain to the teacher why that was the case he got another point for answering back. Three points meant a detention. By that time this boy described how he had a meltdown and went outside. There he broke a school bench, for which he was excluded. And, for that he did want to go back to that school.

In my view that young man may have prospered in a mainstream environment, had the right level of understanding been in place. This would have involved profiling his needs as an SEND student. The staff are only very grateful that he is in the specialist school, but I do wonder sometimes whether there is a better place within an inclusive model for some of our boys, like this one. This would involve assessing their needs before we start and then examining behavioural expectations.

Practical aspects of assessment

Baseline assessment is a really important area for me. Schools can miss opportunities to create baselines, So, I will talk about some practices that I am familiar with in my specialist area and in my role working across lots of different settings of education. Outcomes need to be relative to current abilities and potential, a position which I will illustrate through discussing a model that we use to monitor potential. Consider a SEND pupil, whose EHCP outcomes should be active, relative and be set for a 12 months' period. That is in the legislation, but in practice, when you are working in a classroom that is difficult to act on.

We operate a holistic model that covers all the different aspects of being in the world and being a person. The key aspect is about creating outcomes that are personally relevant. The important part for me is the kind of assessment that sets the baseline, where we are. Then we put in place an outcome, we go through processes, whether it is a social-educational programme or an academic educational programme, we are

assessing and monitoring progress. A new baseline might be set for the next year. That is a model that we use whatever the outcome and kind of programme used.

How can outcomes that are set be best assessed? Not only does a target or an outcome need to be appropriate, but the way you measure it needs to be appropriate. Though it sounds like common sense, it is very difficult when your toolbox is limited, when your capacity and outputs are limited. One way which is seen to represent some best practice according to OFSTED and is beginning to be used is the use of scale tools for creating a baseline and measuring progress. The key point is that at a list of outcomes requires evidence and we want to move away from simple approach of 'have you passed that test' model. This requires more capacity, it requires more input, it requires a different way of measuring.

For a fair selection everybody has to take the same exam. So, if you ask 'please climb that tree', as an example, for a fish as its intelligence, then it is never going to be as intelligent as a monkey. If you have the same tests, how can everyone achieve, how can everyone demonstrate where they are at? So, not only does the target need to be appropriate, the measure needs to be appropriate.

The Scale Tools comes from the Third Sector with the aim of measuring things like emotional growth and resilience, well-being and related characteristics. Funded by the Big Lottery Grant there was a major 6 year programme that looked at well-being. Some schools, including mine, have adopted these Scale Tools to see how we might be able to use them to assess, monitor and quantify information; to create data from feelings, thoughts and attitudes. These are useful for pupils who can engage. For example, if you have a statement such as this; 'I'm able to read without prompts'. That could say, 'Pupil is able to read without prompts' and you are grading that from 'none of the time' to all of the time'. So, you are asking the pupil or the assessor to place a mark on that scale. We have tried these out for three years and found that when pupils were assessing themselves, they just wanted to put 10, every single time or if they were having a bad day a 'zero'. But, with enough assessment points, so, they might give a 'four'. With enough assessments, you could start to build up enough data points to create a model that is starting to look at progress. And when you place that data against more holistic items in a context, you start to really create a whole picture of progression for those young people, who would not have been able to make it through their GCSE grades or their SATs.

Another scale that is sometimes used is an Observation Scale Tool which are completed by external to pupils. There are also other Scale Tools such as the Individualised Learning Scale which covers nine thematic areas, which are completed by the pupil, a professional such as a teacher, and parent or carer. These themes cover areas such as: 'Are you being curious?', 'Have they demonstrated curiosity?', 'Have they been interested in their learning?' and 'Have they demonstrated that they want to read a book, as opposed not?'. These are more supportive for those pupils of lower cognitive abilities because they are an external assessment of them, but not a single assessment.

What I am presenting today is some ways that schools are beginning to approach these assessment issues. Schools are becoming creative about how they document evidence and outcomes and it is not just about numbers, schools are wanting to document better softer and wider outcomes.

But, of course, numbers are useful in terms of Ofsted, as Graeme Douglas said. So, in terms of monitoring progress, it is about little and often, *versus* all at once. We are breaking it down, assessing our outcome achievements at smaller intervals over time. But, it is down to the individual setting and the purpose.

Returning to what Graeme and Christopher talked about whether there is a difference between attainment versus achievement? I would say that there is. Where I work, attainment is represented by numbers; attainment is 'I've attained this goal'. In our school, we have young men from 9 to 19, and we have young men who are doing Entry Level 1 right through to 'A' Levels. But for some the rest of their time may be taken up with more holistic outcomes. We also use some accredited programmes, such as ASDAN, which are useful tools. We can try to start to certificate and accredit our pupils' / students' learning.

Concluding comments

I advocate that greater value needs to be placed on holistic outcomes by Ofsted as that is the only way to match the legislative drive. At the moment, there is a big policy push for broad partnership; that we are all inclusive, we are all going to work together, it is not just about numbers, we can do other things as well, it is going to be about health and care issues. But, that is not necessarily what is happening in practice, because we are still focusing on what do the numbers say. When we sit in a review we still hear 'that's wonderful, and really great that this has happened, that's happened, but what was the SATs scores, can we improve those SATs scores?'

In the new social care provision inspection framework Ofsted has just combined 17 different scales for residential children with SEN, residential schools, special schools that have care aspects to them, into one particular assessment framework. What is interesting about that is a real move away from data. Having just been through one of the first inspections of that as a school, and rated 'outstanding' for that social care provision, the process was completely different to our main Ofsted inspection 2 years ago. They spoke to us for 15 minutes and then they disappeared out of the room and went straight to speak to children. They then sat in the room and said, 'Bring us what data you want to show us, you bring it to us'. The framework was very different to the academic inspections and I wonder if they will follow that lead?

In terms of the DfE, there is a need for increased support to Local Authorities who funding Social care services, whether they're in mainstream or specialist provisions. , I do not think in practice that they have got a full handle on the huge scope and shift that the Children and Families Act has brought to practice. I think they are still very much grounded into something that was before. I think they are struggling against the tide and not really realising that that tide is there.

It has been a time of change over four years and even at a residential, specialist, SEN, frontline provision we have felt that change. We have been able to embrace it and it has benefited us. In mainstream, I wonder where the capacity is. I wonder whether a mainstream teacher has the capacity to meet with every single one of their SEND parents, do their marking, do their planning, and do their PPA, and CPD. The list goes on. How can schools meet the needs of complex SEND learners if they are under resourced and budgets are over stretched?

Section 4:
Summary of discussion groups (1)

Group 1:
There were three main discussion points. The first was that we needed to focus on why are we assessing children? This group thought that was quite fundamental. Is it to inform the teaching and learning for those children, inform their development, or is it for accountability? The second was that the introduction of age-related expectations have put some children into a permanent state of failure. And thirdly, the group also talked about whether the EHCP process is driving the outcomes that are recorded.

Group 2:
This group agreed with the previous one about the continuing failures in the EHCP process to bring Social Care and Health fully into that process. They also recognised that behind that there is still some very big system drivers that are pushing in other directions. The complete cutback in Social Care means that there are lots of perverse decisions about where children are being placed as part of that outcomes assessment. This group was looking forward the Lenehan review (on residential special schools) and whether that was going to address some of these matters. The second key point was about the issue that Graeme Douglas made in his contribution, that it may be that for the whole system we are over-focussing on English and Maths,

Group 3:
This group had reflections that were very similar to the theme from Group 1, in terms of why are we assessing. One of the things that came through was should we not be assessing the qualities that we value as a society? And, that should be much wider than attainment levels in Maths and English. We should be thinking about children's well-being, the other skills that they bring, and thinking about a greater breadth in terms of what we are looking at. This group also considered their experience of schools which are brave enough to do that. They say, 'I'm not going to teach to test, and not going to worry about SATs'. They considered that the result of thinking about children's well-being is that their academic attainment is improved. It was also asserted that experience from other countries, like Finland, who focus very much on that area. This group thought that as a nation, we are focusing on the wrong thing: we are shooting ourselves in the foot a little bit. Finally, this group also had some reflections on the negative implications of this current assessment focus; in terms of exclusions and children who are dropping out of school. These are the children who do not fit with that very kind of narrow view of what it is to achieve by the time they have left school.

Graeme Douglas:
He explained that in their international study they did focus on Finland. Their system is quite deceptive and actually more complex than one might think. They do not have a strong assessment regime, but they do have very high levels of SEN. Interestingly they construct everything so differently. For example, they do not obsess about getting children assessed very young, but there is an underbelly, which is a bit more complicated about SEN. Quite a lot of children are not in mainstream school and they are excluded in subtle ways.

Group 4:
This group also had a wide-ranging discussion. This group talked about why are we talking about SEND when we are meant to be talking about inclusion? The thought that they should be talking about mainstream education in general; it is divisive to start talking about SEND from the very beginning. How are students fitting into the system *versus* the system fitting students? Is the entire national curriculum appropriate for all students? Should we be looking at how that is structured and perhaps thinking about dividing into different life-based strands? So, for example, looking at things like social skills, looking at emotional regulation; looking at things like budgeting, transaction of money, and how can we differentiate that across different dimensions, such as age, levels of ability. Where are parents getting involved in this, how are we securing parental involvement? Then in terms of how this can best be assessed? What has happened to our health visitors, our specialist early years professionals and people that were supporting from the very beginning in terms of looking at the assessment of strengths and challenges? And, possibly thinking about league tables – do we need them? If we do have to have them, what are they measuring? Can they be measuring something wider than they are currently? This perspective fits in well with what the speakers were saying this morning.

Group 5:
This group also went a little bit off topic, having an interesting and varied discussion. The discussion was about the issues in the EHC needs assessment and planning process. It was asserted that plans are not being produced where they are led by needs. What we are doing by talking purely about 'outcome' is starting from 'need. Each need has a provision, each provision has an outcome. This group also talked about to what extent we are really listening to what children and young people want and what their aspirations are. Are we substituting parental views in their place? The group also talked about a real complex is about mental capacity. This relates to the way that people talk about capacity in generic terms, when actually capacity is time and decision specific. There can be a tendency to think that when a child or young person has special education needs or a disability that they lack capacity in this generic way. This is not the case. But, coming from the perspective of parents who have faced all these challenges and barriers from day 1; they are very protective of their children and they do feel they have to put their voice forward in order to give their child a voice. The group also talked about the problem created by the lack of an Education, Health and Care plan template. This creates the issue of outcomes not being recorded in the right way and it being recorded in the wrong sections. There is also a problem with a basic misunderstanding of the law within local authorities and in schools. The legal framework is still not understood sufficiently and until it is, we are not going to get all this right.

This group also talked about SEN Support within schools. Doing away with School Action and School Action Plus and the involvement of external agencies with their expertise is not the same as it was. The group also talked about the fact that society does not attach enough value to non-academic achievement and outcomes, or academic achievements that fall outside of those kind of traditional GCSE, 'A' Level, Degree. There is a tendency to overestimate incapability, and to underestimate capability. So, there is a negative perspective in the first place. There is a real gap around the provision and the support for young people and outcomes for whom employment is not an option – they seem particularly vulnerable. There are real

challenges for any kind of universal assessment system when there is such an inequitable distribution of resources. Graham Easterlow talked about the kind of time that can be spent by his school, because there is such a high staff ratio. That ratio is not reflected certainly in the maintained sector. So, how can you have a universal system when you do not have enough resources spread evenly.

Group 6:
With regards to outcomes, this group was quite old-fashioned and liked 'Every Child Matters' and believed that it should be resurrected. The group was not supportive of the concept of 'secondary ready' and that the views of parents and community need to be included in what they want from the schooling system. The group also looked at the quality of life outcomes. They also wondered if sometimes the objective of 'independence' can mean lower cost particularly in the transition to adulthood.

As for assessment, the group's view was that there needs to be a balance between improvement and assessing for accountability; accountability dominates at the moment. There was a discussion about the arts, drama, creative things, which tend to be found more in independent schools and less in the maintained sector. They looked for a diversity of outcomes and they noted that many parents want their children to be happy and that there is no one objective. The different kinds of inspections and monitoring regimes are all different, and they reflect different values. There was also a discussion about surviving or gaming the system, in relation to welcoming the progress measures. Some in the group thought that some of the local area inspections of SEN were quite positive in that they were not focusing only on the statutory assessment.

Group 7:
This group considered what was meant by 'a worthwhile investment'. There was a difference between an investment in money terms and an investment in time. Many had spent a lot of time working on the new changes. As for outcomes that are relevant, they returned to the idea of 'person-centeredness' and 'personalisation' and about them being linked to aspirations. They also considered the idea of profiling and what is relevant to different populations and demographic groups and thinking about long-term expectations. There is the difficulty of measuring things in the short-term that are really contributing to the long-term. As for outcomes, the group thought that there should be a broad range of differentiated outcomes. They also valued the concept of working in partnership with parents and the young people themselves.

There was also some focus on who should be assessing and where is the voice of the young person in saying how they think they are getting on in terms of their own outcomes. There needed to be a sense of progression towards the outcomes, but that they should not be so narrow as to be become like old-school targets as such. To ensure that the outcomes were properly valued, we believed that it was about measuring what we value, rather than valuing what we measure. This related to the idea of well-being that a few of the other groups had mentioned.

Group 8:
This group talked about assessment and outcomes which was hard to separate. These were discussed at different levels. For example, they discussed the emphasis in the new regime that requires young people and their families to talk about their hopes, their aspirations and what outcomes they want in life. For some this was very

positive, with examples of young people who had never even been asked that before. But, there is also assessment and outcomes at the institutional level, which is where problems start. This is where there can be a conflict between the assessment and outcomes for child, as it becomes measured and reported at an institutional level, then at a local area level, then at a national level. This is where you start to see the rhetoric of what is important for a child and what they achieve, not being reflected in any national standards.

This group then moved onto two other areas that were important to people, which were the issues of social-emotional well-being (social skills, social competence, confidence) and the preparation for adulthood framework, an outcomes framework. The group focussed on how Sheffield has looked at the ASCOF framework that was mentioned, which represents a proper preparation for adulthood. They wondered where is the framework against which those outcomes can be integrated. This related to what Graham Douglas had mentioned, conflict between Ofsted, the external inspection regime, and what schools want to develop the life chances of their own children. O, there is no context which can assist a school's performance and it's community. This led the group to consider the worrying national profile about children being moved out progressively from their local mainstream schools. One member of the group called it an explosion, the growth of fixed term and permanent exclusion and the very significant over-representation of children with special educational needs. More Education, Health and Care plans is not the answer.

Section 5:
Assessment issues for children and young people with significant/complex learning difficulties.
Jean Ware

Introduction
This section looks at six issues around assessment and valuing of educational outcomes for children and young people with significant/ complex learning difficulties in the light of the recent publication of the Rochford Review (2016):

1. Who are children and young people with significant / complex learning difficulties?
2. What is important for us to assess for these learners?
3. How should these learners be assessed?
4. What are the problems?
5. What are appropriate uses for this assessment?
6. What is the contribution of the Rochford Review to addressing these questions?

There is no agreement about which learners are included by the term 'significant/ complex learning difficulties. 'Complex learning difficulties' is a problematic term, because it can be a bit of a 'catch-all'; learners with autistic spectrum disorder, learners with multisensory impairments and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) have all been described as having complex needs (e.g. Nind, 1996; Watson and Fisher, 1997, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, 2011). This lack of agreement fuels a level of confusion when any attempt is made to discuss either the needs of this group or the development of policy to ensure that these needs are met.

I intend, therefore, to concentrate on one sub-group of learners with complex needs, those with PMLD. There is no universally agreed definition of this group either, but as Bellamy et al.'s 2010 study to define the term demonstrated, there is a wide level of agreement about the core characteristics of the group, which include a profound level of intellectual disability together with one or more other severe impairments (for example a physical or sensory disability) (Lacey, 1998; Ware, 1996). These core characteristics are evident in the following definition, which is widely cited as the 'official DfE definition'.

> "Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have complex learning needs. In addition to very severe learning difficulties, pupils have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities, sensory impairment or a severe medical condition.
> Pupils require a high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and also for their personal care. They are likely to need sensory stimulation and a curriculum broken down into very small steps. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols, others by very simple language. Their attainments are likely to remain in the early P scale range (P1-P4) throughout school. (DfE, 2003)"

In fact, this definition is also potentially somewhat problematic, because it contains reference to the type of curriculum needed by learners with PMLD and to their expected assessment performance in terms of the 'P Scales'. Arguably therefore it's guilty of the sort of tautology of which the old Code of Practice was often accused. But it does at least give a clear picture of severity of the difficulties which people with PMLD experience. Interestingly, Bellamy et al.'s research (2010) found that family carers preferred definitions which highlight 'the circumstances which are necessary to enable individuals with PMLD to be given the opportunity to participate in their immediate situation, their community and ultimately in wider society.' (Bellamy et al., 2010 p232). And to at least some extent, with its references to sensory stimulation and a curriculum broken down into small steps the DfE definition does meet those criteria.

I have chosen to limit what I am saying to this group of learners for three reasons. The first is simply pragmatic, given the wide range of different needs which are sometimes included under the heading 'significant and complex needs' some limitation is necessary. Second, it is possible to argue, as Norwich has done in the past, that these learners present a sort of test case. Of all learners their needs are the most extreme, the progress they are expected to make in comparison with other learners is the least and so, arguably, they exemplify general issues to do with assessment at their most critical.

There is however an additional reason for concentrating on this group of learners- and that is that in terms of addressing issues to do with assessment, they are amongst the least satisfactorily served (Tadema et al.,2005; Vlaskamp, 2005)

What is it important to assess for these learners?

What I want to say is that one crucial issue in assessing any learner, or group of learners, is deciding the priorities for assessment. We cannot assess everything, so what should we assess?

In the field of PMLD, there is general agreement that communication is absolutely central for these learners (Goldbart and Ware, 2015), and therefore that accurate and detailed assessment of communication is essential.

But, as noted in that DfE definition, the majority of these learners do not communicate through speech, and some will be at the pre-intentional stage of communication. It is not surprising, then that families both in Bellamy et al.'s study and another by Goldbart and Caton (2010) identified familiar communication partners, who know how the individual communicates, and what meaning can be attached to specific behaviours, as of particular importance. This may also be what is most important in assessment terms for some learners with PMLD. What makes most difference in terms of outcomes, may be having a consistent interaction partner who is able to 'read' their communication; and, for some of these learners, the most important outcomes may be in terms of quality of life, rather than more obviously 'educational' outcomes. If you have profound and multiple learning difficulties and are perhaps often uncomfortable or in pain; it is of critical importance that if, at all possible, you are enabled to convey that to someone who will take action on your behalf. Of course, as part of achieving that objective it is also important to establish

baselines, and develop strategies for moving the learner on. For example, what meanings does the individual convey, do they do so intentionally or pre-intentionally? So good, appropriate, assessments of communication are important; but developing an assessment of communication (or any other area) specifically for this group faces considerable barriers, for example, developing rigorous, fit for purpose assessments is very costly, and the very low incidence of PMLD means that people with PMLD make up only a tiny percentage of the population (around 0.025%, Mansell, 2010). The diversity of challenges faced by people with PMLD makes the development of an assessment for this group especially challenging. Additionally the drive towards inclusive assessment means that the need for PMLD-specific assessments is not always acknowledged. Two communication assessments usually seen as particularly helpful for learners with PMLD are the Affective Communication Assessment (Coupe-O'Kane and Goldbart, 1998) and the Triple C (Bloomberg et al., 2009).

Besides communication, other areas which the majority of people working in this field probably agree should be prioritised for assessment are; cognition – which includes skills such as problem-solving, and PHSE (e.g. Nadjii and Tymms, 2009). Some, particularly, perhaps, in continental Europe, also regard motor skills as an important area. Assessment is equally challenging in all these areas.

Other issues

These learners are operating at such an early level that they are not able 'to play the assessment game'. So assessment generally consists of the methodical collection of evidence and careful observation of the learner most often in natural situations and often over a period of time, although occasionally situations may be engineered to test whether a learner has achieved a particular step.

Despite the challenges, there are a number of assessment instruments which are designed to help educators with this process. In England, there are the 'P Scales' (DfE, 2014). The 'P Scales have been in use since 1998, and are currently statutory in England. However, if the recommendations of the Rochford Review are accepted they will no longer be so. The P Scales make the assumption that at the very earliest stages (P1-3 see figure 1) division into conventional school subjects such as 'maths' or 'geography' is not relevant, as there are very early generic skills which apply in all areas,

Figure 1 P Scales – P1-3

P1 (i) Pupils encounter activities and experiences
• They may be passive or resistant
P2 (i) Pupils begin to respond consistently to familiar people, events and objects
P2 (ii) Pupils begin to be proactive in their interactions
P3 (i) Pupils begin to communicate intentionally
P3 (ii) Pupils use emerging conventional communication

It can be seen from Figure 1 that Communication features strongly in these early generic skills. The 'P Scales are a 'best fit' assessment, so it is not necessary for a

learner to have met all the criteria for a particular level to be credited with that level, just the majority of them.

However, for some learners with PMLD, even these levels seem to be too broad, so from the earliest days of the P Scales, some schools working with learners with PMLD, have seen a need to use other more detailed assessments in order to document learner progress, and sometimes also in order to be sure about which level on the P Scales is the best fit. A range of additional assessment materials were developed to answer this need, e.g. B-squared (2017) and PIVATS (LCC, 2017) . Evidence from a recent survey by Ware and Weston (2016) suggests that schools that use the P Scales have continued to find additional assessments helpful or necessary in order to demonstrate progress for pupils with PMLD and set appropriate targets for them.

The most popular assessment other than the P Scales for this group is probably 'Routes for Learning' (RfL) which was published by the (then) Welsh Assembly Government in 2006. RfL currently looks only at Communication and Cognition, although a revision is currently under discussion. RfL is very specifically aimed at learners with PMLD, and covers only about the first 18 months in developmental terms, with more detail in the earlier stages. It tries to map potential pathways (Routes) from one milestone to the next and is explicit about the likelihood that learners may follow different routes, and that this may depend to some extent on the nature of their disabilities.

Problems in Assessing Educational Outcomes for Learners with PMLD

As mentioned above, learners with PMLD cannot play the assessment game, and that this means collecting evidence over time. There is also considerable evidence that their performance is particularly inconsistent from day to day and situation to situation. For the reasons mentioned above, there is very little research on the assessment of learners with PMLD. Neither RfL nor any of the other assessments specifically devised for learners with PMLD is standardised. That makes moderation at school or authority, or academy chain level a real challenge. There are similar problems too, in relation to the collection of overall performance data, as illustrated by the work of Centre for Educational Monitoring at Durham University (Ndaji and Tymms, 2009)

The 'P Scales' data that has been collected by the Centre for Educational Monitoring at Durham University is from a considerable number of schools since 1999. Data for learners with MLD and SLD collected as part of that project show that older learners score higher than younger learners; similarly data for learners with MLD shows progress from year to year. However, data for those with PMLD shows that these learners score more or less the same regardless of age. There are several possible explanations for this, but it may be that in relation to learners with PMLD the P Scales are insufficiently fine-grained to show progress, adding support to the view of teachers that additional assessment instruments are needed for this purpose.

Research on RfL has been much less systematic than that for the P Scales; probably because there has been no government funding for such research, so that what has been done has been at the initiative of individuals or schools. Several small-scale projects have, however, shown that teachers believe Routes is fit for purpose, (e.g.

van Walwyck, 201; McDermott and Atkinson, 2016). In addition, some individual schools have kept data in a systematic fashion, in order to use them for school self-evaluation and improvement. A tracking tool for this purpose has been developed on the initiative of one of the original team who developed Routes (Martin, 2017). Aggregating data for a cohort of children in this way enables potential bottlenecks in progress to be identified, and hypotheses to be generated as to the potential reasons. For example, pupils with visual impairments might consistently become 'stuck' at a particular step and identifying this could enable the school to look for potential solutions, to enable these pupils to make better progress.

The contribution of the Rochford Review to addressing these questions

The Rochford Review recommends that the P Scales should cease to be statutory in England and that learners with SLD and PMLD should instead be assessed in the 7 areas of engagement developed by the Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (CLDD) project (http://thesendhub.co.uk/the-cldd-research-project/) (responsiveness, curiosity, discovery, anticipation, persistence, initiation and investigation). They suggest that this will ensure schools give appropriate attention to the development of concepts and skills that are pre-requisites for progressing on to subject-specific learning. This would become a statutory duty. However, it is curious that no specific method of assessing the areas of engagement is recommended. This will make moderation within and across schools and settings, significantly more difficult and, like the other assessment instruments discussed in this chapter the engagement scales are not standardised. Moderation within and across settings is essential if we are to make the education of these learners as effective as possible; as has been demonstrated in research both on the P Scales and in school-based work on RfL.

Furthermore, the Review recommends that assessment in other areas is to be non-statutory. Assessment in cognition and learning is to be the only statutory assessment because it maps onto what are seen as the most critical skills for mainstream / all learners. Of course, cognition and learning is very important for learners with PMLD, and the CLDD engagement scales highlight critical aspects which have frequently been neglected. But, for the great majority of learners with PMLD, communication, interpreted very broadly and focusing on interpersonal understanding is widely regarded as being of central importance because, as Bunning (2009) says:

> "Communication is the conduit between the individual and the world. It is the very cornerstone of identity formation, social engagement and human relationships…..In this respect, people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities (PIMDs) are no different to the typically developing population. The real differences lie in the scope and level of sophistication of available skills and the role performed by significant others (the people who engage with them on a daily basis)." Bunning (2009, p.46).

To conclude: assessment policy for this group of learners needs to ensure that what is assessed is what matters most, that moderation within and between settings is possible, and that the data collected is used to inform teaching and learning- so that the learners concerned can make the best possible progress. That after all, is what all learners deserve- not least those with significant and complex learning difficulties

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Section 6:
Accountability and implications for SEND
Anne Heavey

Accountability is an essential for securing high quality SEND provision. Yet, as this paper explores, if accountability levers introduce, or reinforce, policy tensions in SEND provision, accountability instruments can be counterproductive and have a negative impact on the experiences of children and young people with SEND. Since 2010, the education system has become increasingly fragmented, with the introduction of academy and free schools as well as the conscious choice made promote variation at Local Authority (LA) level via the Local Offer. In this context securing meaningful accountability is challenged by the multitude of school types, local approaches and cultures and onslaught of education and health reform. Whilst making comparisons between LA is difficult because of this fragmentation, so too is securing meaningful improvement. It is not always clear who is responsible for addressing any failings in SEND provision, for example Local Authorities have limited powers to implement improvements in academy schools.

Why accountability matters: SEND provision is failing too many children and young people.

Outcomes for children and young people are not good enough, and for many, the experiences of securing recognition and support for SEND is extremely negative DFE (2016) (1). Currently, children and young people with SEND are more likely to be excluded from school. Pupils with SEND account for over half of all permanent exclusions and fixed period exclusions. These pupils also often attain lower results in statutory assessments and qualifications - in 2016 just 14% of pupils with SEND reached the expected standard at key stage 2 (2), and less than a quarter or pupils with SEND achieved A*-C grades in both English and Mathematics (3).

Children and young people with disabilities are also at higher risk of exploitation and grooming (4). A recent DfE research report also highlighted that pupils with SEND are more likely to be unhappy at school than their peers without SEND (5). Accountability, then, has a part to play in highlighting weaknesses in the system and securing vital improvements.

What are the SEND accountability mechanisms?

Before considering how specific accountability instruments that evaluate SEND provision operate it might be helpful to first identify two groups, those that are, or at least should be, held to account, and those to whom others are accountable for SEND provision.

Those held to account for SEND provision include:

- Schools (6)
- Local Authorities
- NHS CCGs
- Individual school leaders
- Individual school staff, including support staff and teachers
- Government officials

Those who hold others to account for SEND provision:

- Government bodies
- Local Authorities
- School leaders and governors
- Parents and carers
- The child or young person
- The electorate
- Tribunal courts
- School leadership

One might suggest that the focus of accountability instruments is not applied evenly across all bodies or individuals who have responsibility for SEND provision. One might also suggest that not all those with an interest in evaluating SEND provision quality have suitable instruments to do so.

A range of accountability instruments are used to evaluate SEND provision, which include:

- Inspections
- Statutory processes and expectations, SEND code of practice
- League table measures
- Financial accountability
- Tribunals
- DfE transparency releases, such as the annual SEND statistical release (7)

Children, young people and their parents and carers are also held to account via school policies and mechanisms such as "home school agreements". It is important to recognise this as some schools are known to use these processes to manage SEND and, on occasion, remove pupils with SEND who require support. The use of "zero tolerance" school behaviour policies when applied to pupils with SEND can result in children being labelled as "naughty" and undermine building essential positive relationships between families and schools.

Many children and young people with SEND do not have formal recognition. Understanding how the system works for these pupils is extremely difficult. Since 2010 half a million children with a formal identification of SEND have lost their status, it is difficult to accept narrative of "historical over identification" as an explanation for the reduction, and many of those children will have had additional needs and lost formal support (8).

And what about the children and young people who are no longer considered in need of SEND support? Some consideration should be given to whether a designation like FSM could have in understanding outcomes of pupils who lose or no longer require SEN Support. Better accountability is needed for pupils with SEN who do not have EHCPs, with almost 80% of pupils at PRUs identified at SEN Support. It is clear that something is going wrong in the mainstream system for these pupils, yet as recent DfE research has highlighted some LAs do not monitor outcomes for this group of pupils (9) and many pupils have lost their SEN support status.

The accountability mechanisms are not working.

Inspection

Several different inspection frameworks consider SEND provision quality, for example, the Common Inspection Framework, LA Local Area CQC/Ofsted SEND inspections, and Residential Care Inspections. Many ATL members who have been involved in SEND local area inspections have reported that inspectors mainly consider the practices of the Local Authority and are not necessarily capturing the full picture. Many significant weaknesses in local provision, especially concerning pupils at SEN Support level, are hidden successfully from inspectors.

There are also concerns that not all parents and children who want to be involved in the inspection have been able to, and that "the loudest voices" are heard. This can mean that the impression gained by inspectors can be distorted and the experiences of the most vulnerable, and most disengaged, can be absent. The groups of pupils and parents that inspectors engaged with are not always diverse enough to fully reflect the full range of experience within a Local Area. Whilst Ofsted is clearly making real attempts at engaging pupils and parents in these inspections, especially with social media, more needs to be done.

However, the structure of these reports has been welcomed by others. The narrative judgments highlight strengths and weaknesses and can give parents valuable insight into how the Local Area functions. Some inspections have also identified local weaknesses, for example weakness in transition arrangements for pupils with SEND moving from primary and secondary settings - which have enabled Local Authorities to implement positive change. In fact, one ATL member who recently experienced an LA SEND inspection found that the absence of the traditional four inspection outcome grades made it easier for them to have meaningful and professional conversations about the strengths and weaknesses in the LA, without fear of "failing".

Considering the real function of the accountability system is important here, is the role simply to report the current state of affairs, or should it also drive improvement? At the time of writing 31 Local Area SEND joint Ofsted and CQC inspections have taken place. 9 of these inspections have highlighted significant failings. It is not yet clear how the Local Areas with significant failings will be monitored to ensure that necessary improvements are made.

School inspections undertaken under Section 5 of Common Inspection Framework often give limited insight into the experience for pupils with SEND. Many ATL members have reported concerns about the capacity for inspectors to evaluate SEND provision, both in terms of the expertise and time devoted to considering SEND in an inspection.

A typical inspection lasts two days, and inspectors may only spend one and a half days around the school. It is well known that some schools feel the need to hide some SEND pupils during the inspection - either by "inviting" pupils not to come in, or removing them from classes (10). The pressure to secure or retain a "good" judgement can drive some school leaders to reduce the contact that inspectors have

with SEND pupils. The suspicion that having a large cohort of pupils with SEND makes securing a "good" judgement harder may be backed up by recent research undertaken by the Education Policy Institute (EPI). The findings of a recent EPI report on Ofsted suggest that the greater the proportion of pupils with low prior attainment (which can function as a proxy for SEN) the harder it is for a school to attain a good or outstanding judgement (11). When school leaders feel "punished" for providing an inclusive learning environment something is clearly wrong with the system.

Furthermore, the move to exempt "Outstanding" schools from regular inspection, has left a significant gap in our understanding of how many schools perform for pupils with SEND. In January 2017 there were over 1200 schools that had not received an inspection for 7 years (12). These schools can only face re-inspection if Ofsted is alerted to significant concerns, despite the fact that many of these schools have not been inspected since the introduction of the SEND Code of Practice. When it comes to school inspections under the Common Inspection Framework it is difficult to argue that this form of regulation has a positive impact on SEND provision.

Performance measures

Progress is now the leading performance measure for schools, and whilst there remain attainment targets, schools have to maintain "good" progress scores to stay above coasting and floor standards. The consequences for failing to do so can be harsh, leaders can lose their jobs and schools can be forcibly converted to academy status or transferred to a new Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

The Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening, has made several significant commitments to lowering the stakes around accountability data and supporting schools to improve working with the current leadership of a school (13). Until school performance data is believed to be the start of the professional conversation and supportive improvement process and not the trigger for harsh intervention, the role of league tables in undermining inclusion is likely to remain.

In secondary schools Progress 8 is now the leading headline measure, and in primary schools new progress measures for reading, writing and mathematics have been introduced. The DfE have presented the new primary progress measures as fairer for schools:

There are 2 main advantages to the new progress measures:
- they are fairer to schools because we can compare pupils with similar starting points to each other
- they recognise the progress schools make with all their pupils, highlighting the best schools whose pupils go furthest, whatever their starting point (14)

The new Progress measures were introduced to be a "fairer measure" but due to their design pupils with SEND have average progress scores significantly lower than pupils without SEND who have the same prior attainment.

Here in Figure 1 are the 2015/2016 progress scores for pupils in primary school with and without SEND:

Figure 1: Average key stage 2 progress scores 2015-16
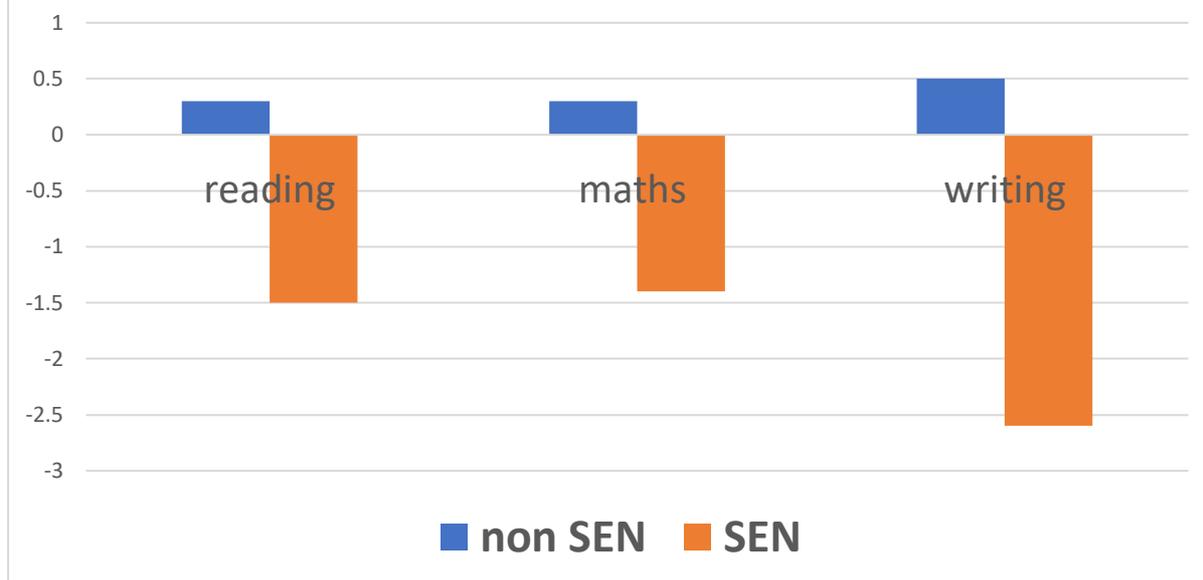
Children with SEND are already likely to receive lower attainment scores than their peers without SEND, last year just 14% achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, at the end of primary school compared to 62% of children without SEND. The progress measure should come to recognise the development of these pupils and the progress they make, but with average progress scores of -1.5, -2.6 and -1.4 (as shown in the table above) these progress measures are not truly reflecting the achievements of these pupils either (15). This is due to the design of this progress measure in which the lowest attainment groups include many pupils with EAL, as well as those with SEND. Pupils with EAL often make significantly greater progress than their peers without EAL, which distorts the expected progress for pupils with SEND. In this system, expectations are too low for children with EAL, but too high for those with SEND. If the government presses ahead with the introduction of a new reception baseline assessment then this will entrench these distorted expectations for both EAL and SEND pupils.

Progress 8, the measure used in secondary schools also has design flaws which disadvantage pupils with SEND. Whilst the DfE is now considering the "impact of outliers", many ATL members have reported that progress measures do not promote inclusion. The Progress 8 score for pupils with SEND was -0.55 compared to 0.06 for those with no SEND.

The impact of having a large cohort of pupils with SEND on a school's progress measures could be significant, and given the high stakes attached to meeting floor and coasting standards, one could understand if school leaders wanted to limit the numbers of pupils with SEN at the school. Whilst this would be unethical, in the current high stakes accountability context, it is not unimaginable.

The need to achieve "good" progress and attainment scores for pupils with SEND can lead to schools putting pupils with SEND through a barrage of "interventions" at the expense of experiencing the full school curriculum. The balance here between delivering personalised SEND support and school accountability support is a fine one, but several ATL members have questioned who some of these interventions are actually for; the child or the school.

Financial accountability

Ensuring that Local Authorities and schools are spending money allocated for SEND provision appropriately is a reasonable expectation, but this area of accountability is undermined by the fact that there simply is not enough money in the system (16).

Some of the approaches that Local Authorities use to allocate a tight High Needs pot are opaque, require excessive workload on the part of applicants and fail to recognise the full cost of provision. Banding, matrix and other calculation tools can feel impersonal and remote from the pupil and their parents, whilst "bidding" approaches rely heavily on the staff completing the application to have the knowledge of the pupil and process to secure the right provision. Both approaches can be problematic, and the sheer variety of methodologies used by Local Authorities to allocate the High Needs budget makes evaluating the fairness and effectiveness of decision very difficult. The pressure placed on special schools to cut the cost of their services, so that LAs can balance the books, denies children the quality of provision they need and makes retaining suitably qualified staff difficult. Local Authorities often take much of the blame for inadequate resources of SEND provision - but without sufficient funding from central government LAs remain in an extremely difficult position.

One could suggest that the introduction of the new High Needs Funding Formula represents a missed opportunity to address some of the most problematic approaches used across LAs. Introducing a national, or at very least regional, complex needs fund to commission places and provision for pupils with the most complex SEND could serve the dual purpose of allowing LAs to create special school places where they are needed whilst also ensuring that in areas with high demand for residential places the local high needs pot remains available to all those pupils who require it.

SEND funding is not ring fenced, and individual schools do not always outline SEND spend in a transparent way. The expectation that schools should spend up to £6000 from their core budget on each child identified at SEN Support is a disincentive to identifying SEN at a time that school budgets are under significant strain. SENCos are not always sufficiently involved in spending decisions that impact on commissioning SEND provision, and unless on the senior leadership often unable to challenge spending decisions. Understanding how spending decisions around SEND provision are made is essential for genuine accountability, and for holding Local Authorities and Central Government to account for the resources they put into the system.

Tribunals

Tribunals function as a form of accountability, where parents can address concerns and failings in SEND provision. The high success rate for parents (88%) (17) suggests that system is unable to meet the promises laid out in the SEND Code of Practice. Whilst tribunals may be highly successful in securing better outcomes in individual cases, they are problematic. Bringing a problem to tribunal relies on individual parents having time, knowledge and financial means, which means that they are inaccessible for many. Speaking to one parent who recently went through the tribunal process, her impression was that the Local Authority viewed tribunals as an additional category of EHCP, EHCP+, accessible only to pupils with parents who can fight to secure necessary provision. Whilst this is arguably an effective approach to managing inadequate resources, requiring parents to fight to secure statutory entitlements goes against the principles underpinning the SEND Code of Practice. Arguably the tribunal serves to widen the provision gap between those with cultural capital and those without, as well as addressing injustices in the system. The tribunal instrument also fails to address system level failings, which means that long term problems are not addressed.

The problem with holding schools and Local Authorities to account

Schools and Local Authorities are subject to significant accountability for the quality of SEND provision that they offer, but are operating at a time where they lack sufficient resources to deliver the quality and quantity expected.

Schools are facing huge teacher recruitment and retention challenges and experiences considerable financial pressures. Given that high quality SEND provision does involve cost, including resources, training or additional support and specialist staff, it is understandable that some schools are struggling to deliver the quality of provision expected. Recent reports of schools cutting support staff to balance the books, leaving pupils without necessary support, are alarming and indicative of a system in which too often support staff are seen as expendable, even wasteful (18). Indeed, the latest DfE financial efficiency benchmarking tool could be seen as encouraging school leaders to focus on reducing support staff when finding savings in the school budget (18).

Local Authorities, who have significant statutory duties relating to SEND, have faced both severe financial cuts and limitations on their ability to discharge these statutory duties (19). LAs are unable to intervene in academy schools where concerns are raised about SEND provision, and compromised in part often by the desire to engage academy schools as commercial partners through "buy-back" and "traded services" arrangements. Some ATL members working in LAs have shared examples where the LA has overlooked significant concerns about academy SEND practice, typically around exclusion, so as not to lose business in the next academic year. Cuts to LA budgets have also had an impact on the breadth of SEND services offered to schools, as well as capacity to attend meetings and complete EHCPs within statutory deadlines.

As a result of rules surrounding the opening of new schools Local Authorities face significant burdens in commissioning special school places, which may explain why the numbers of pupils "awaiting provision" has significantly increased in recent years (2015: 3,438, 2016: 5,414, 2017: 8,304) (20). Whilst these changes to LA powers were not introduced to undermine SEND provision, they have. Giving LAs statutory

duties, but not sufficient powers or funding to discharge them is a failing at governmental level.

Summary of concerns

1. Schools are subject to multiple accountability levers that can interact in ways that have a negative impact on SEND provision.

2. The current school level performance measures could undermine inclusion. These progress measures also fail to provide meaningful information to parents about how an individual school is performing.

3. As a regulator, Ofsted is not performing well enough, despite the introduction of the promising LA SEND inspections.

4. The Government has not put sufficient resources into the system and there is no clear mechanism to address these shortcomings beyond general elections.

5. Fragmentation leaves many children and parents at the mercy of a postcode lottery.

6. Parents with cultural capital have more levers available to secure necessary provision, widely the gap in SEND provision.

Final thoughts

Too many of the accountability measures explored above fail to give voice to the real experiences of children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers. There is a lot of information in the system about SEND, but not enough of it is meaningful and in too many instances the path to improvement is not clear. Any strong accountability system must be able to recognise strengths and context, whilst always remembering that even the best systems can be better.

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Section 7: Summary of discussion groups (2)

Group 1:
This group spent most time talking about the issue of school leadership. One member reflected on the need for leadership to be more confident, more thoughtful, and more 'values' driven. They talked about the inherent confusion in schools in relation to Progress 8, the EBacc and the new numerical grades for GCSEs. Some in the group were mystified by it and it was assumed that many people are. It is this context that school leadership plays a key role. There was also discussion about approaches that were being used to support and improve schools through school leaders; approaches like the National College and sector-led improvement in various stances. So, for this group most of the discussion was around accountability and the impact of overarching policy, but mostly leadership.

Group 2:
For the group it was important that any assessment tool enables schools to self-evaluate their own provision and in particular pupils' responses to the curriculum. It was suggested, for instance, that 'assessment for all' has been used by many schools to improve outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and that might be a useful tool to consider. The group also thought that it was important that an assessment system of any sort responds to both parents and pupils needs and provides them with useful and an easily understood measures of progress, but also involves them in the strategies going forward. It was concluded that at the moment the present assessment system is not easy for parents to understand – so they don't really know where they are, where their children are.

Group 3:
This group considered that the Children and Families Act is based around a holistic provision model, but assessment is segregated and fragmented. There is a lack of collective responsibility between Education, Health and Care, so primarily the responsibility falls at Education's door, increasingly. The next one is that needs to be resolved is the tension between developmentally determined educational needs and chronologically determined accountability – in many ways the two of those seem mutually incompatible. The third point was that it was worth considering a little further the extent to which assessment can meet a social justice model as opposed to an economic one. Underlying this point is that assessment is primarily about realising the workforce potential rather than actually improving social outcomes for children.

Additional individual point:
One person in this group wanted to reinforce something Jean Ware talked about. Many assessment issues are about the trickling down from mainstream assessments towards SLD/PMLD. Jean made the valid point that in fact a lot of the assessment practice that is discussed and debated around SLD/PMLD actually can be brought into a much wider debate about assessment. I think it's important to turn that on its head. I hope that reflects what was said earlier. Jean Ware commented that in Wales, the Donaldson Report, which is about the curriculum in general, actually took up *Routes for Learning*, which is an assessment designed for children with PMLD.

Group 4:

This group talked about how much easier the whole debate around assessment would be if there was reform of Ofsted, so that fitted assessment needs, rather than the other way round. Without Ofsted, we could deal with this situation much more easily. One person in the group came up with a way of saying what has been said all day: in terms of assessment, one question is about assessing schools, and the other is about assessing children. We are constantly trying to marry the two when it is difficult to do both with one tool.

The group then went severely off task but managed to get back to a serious point, I think, which was that if we only measured what OFSTED asks schools to do, the effect would be to drop all the other opportunities that our group of children have the chance to show. It would leave out what they are able to do, things which we want to measure.

Group 5:
This group tried to be very positive as is the way in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. What is needed is a 'want to - can do' approach and the secret weapon is parent involvement. It is parents who augment and support and have the overall responsibility for our special children. Parents need a first point of contact, whoever that should be. It used to be valued in Common Assessment Framework before EHCPs. This person ought to take responsibility for providing a roadmap to give parents support for the very early years. There used to be Parent Partnership Associations and now there are Information, Advice and Support Services. They need to signpost what is available, so that parents can

The second point was about accountability. The group struggled to find positive points, because our resources, for example, from a Local Authority perspective, were cut out and delegated. Although the local authority remains accountable they actually have not got any resources to do anything about it. So, there seems to be a conflict of interest which the group talked about. The Educational Psychologists, who were determining whether children needed special educational support or even statutory assessment were seen by parents as rationing provision.

The group's third point was about Continuing Professional Development and initial teacher education. Some in this group believed that Initial teacher training needed a great deal more time on what is happening in schools in terms of managing large classes that have children with SEN in them. This is something that school leadership could look at more closely.

Additional point:
This was a point made by someone who works in initial teacher education. This person believed that much was to be done to change training. The junior NQT teacher is not necessarily the person who institutes change. Those who are in the most powerful position to institute change within a school, aside from the Head Teacher, are the SENCo/ This is why the SENCo training is so important. If we want to see reform, we could use that as the biggest lever of all. Ideally, of course, SENCos are on the Senior Leadership Team in the school, and they are trained specifically to that role. This point was countered by someone else who asserted that some teachers should not be SENCos. There are also issues about their capacity and time for the job. Another person agreed about how difficult the SENCo was unless the staff themselves have had training.

Group 6:
This group identified three ways forward. The first was about Continuing Professional Development and the value of collaboration, peer review, self- evaluation, exchange placements. This includes teachers doing their own research. The 'assess – plan – do – review' process is a good starting point. The second point, which reiterates what a lot of groups have said, was about it being on a school leadership agenda. The third was ring-fencing and accountability of SEND funding and we also, as a separate issue, thought there should be a league table of well-being.

G**roup 7**:
This group their discussion as 'descending into a spiral of despair'. They were very concerned around the high-stakes accountability framework and an over-emphasis on testing. The summative testing of children has created some systemic issues that we are asking SENCos and teachers to try to address. The concern is about the progress and accountability measures not incentivising positive responses to diversity. So, this group would like to change, the OFSTED framework so accountability measures do reward positive responses to diversity. For the person reporting the discussion, this involves a move away from a model of performativity and high- stakes accountability towards a model of enabling professionalism and trust, To move us towards that, the group focused on process of formative assessment and assessment for learning, which applies to all young people. If there is good practice in one area you apply the benefits to children and young people with SEN as well.

This group felt that through professional development teachers could be enabled to use formative assessment skills. This is about actually creating a system in which teachers could have the confidence to take teaching forward in their classroom in a way that promotes the well-being of children. This is about children being happy and enjoying their learning and amazingly enough. One member gave as an example, children who perform extremely well in the dodgy tests that they are then asked to do because they were confident and happy learners in the first place. For this group the need is to empower the teaching profession.

Concluding comments:
It was evident from what was reported and presented that there are still, for a variety of reasons, children and young people in the system, who are not getting access to much in the way of assessment. There are children who are missing from the system. It is also evident that models of assessment continue to pose dilemmas and challenges for us, but clearly there are values in assessing children and young people but in ways that we want to see reaping positive rewards. Most clearly in the light of seminar discussion, there are a tranche of issues at the system level that make assessment particularly problematic for vulnerable children and young people. I hope we'll capture that, or some of that, in the policy paper.