



House of Commons  
Education and Skills Committee

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# Special Educational Needs: Assessment and Funding

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**Tenth Report of Session 2006–07**

*Report, together with formal minutes*

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## The Education and Skills Committee

The Education and Skills Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Education and Skills and its associated public bodies.

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### Footnotes

In the footnotes for this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated by the page number as in 'Ev 12' or by reference to 'written evidence' followed by the name of the organisation or individual submitting it.

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## Summary

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One of the key issues in making provision for children with special educational needs is ensuring that parents have confidence that professionals are genuinely seeking to provide appropriate support for their children, a point that was made by many of those who submitted evidence. That was the basis for our previous recommendation on separating funding from assessment. This does not mean that we are questioning the integrity of the professionals involved; it is rather that tensions in the system can give rise to mistrust, unfounded as it may be, which helps no one.

We have received in evidence a number of serious suggestions about how confidence in the process of addressing children's special needs might be improved through separating assessment from funding, three of which we highlight in this report: Commissioning of assessments by local authorities or Children's Trusts; delegation of responsibilities for assessment to schools; and making educational psychology services more independent. We ask the Government to give a considered response to the proposals that we have discussed for separating assessment from funding, and to examine carefully their potential effectiveness in helping to enhance parental satisfaction with the way in which special needs are identified and addressed.

The development of the Common Assessment Framework as a means of assessing special educational needs was advocated, or acknowledged as likely to be a significant development, by a number of contributors, from local authorities, support groups, professional organisations and academics. We ask the Government to tell us how it anticipates the increased use of the Common Assessment Framework and the continued development of Children's Trusts will impact on assessment of special educational needs, what advice it is giving on the use of the Common Assessment Framework for assessing special educational needs, and what implications it considers this will have for the statementing process.

Funding is clearly a vital issue. A number of those contributing to the inquiry argued that there needs to be far greater transparency in the funding system. Others were concerned that money delegated to schools to fund provision for special educational need might not necessarily be spent as intended. In the run up to the publication of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review [CSR], the then DfES and the Treasury conducted a joint review of support for disabled children and their families. In the CSR document published on 9 October 2007, the Government said that it intended to spend £340 million over the CSR period to give additional support to those children and young people. The outcome of the review for children with special needs more widely are not yet clear. We ask the Government to make an early statement on how the money from the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review will be used to improve services for all children and young people with special needs, and the guidance that it will be giving to local authorities and schools to ensure that money provided for special needs is spent on special needs.

One of the main recommendations of our previous report was that there ought to be a national strategy for special needs provision within which individual local authorities and schools would be free to make provision suitable for their circumstances. We also recommended that each local authority should produce a provision map, setting out the services and support that schools and other providers across each area ought to be making available. The Government indicated some support for a national framework, but made no commitment to its introduction. We ask the Government to make explicit commitments to provide a national framework for special educational needs and to require local authorities to publish provision maps for each area. Making the requirements that are placed on authorities and providers explicit, easily accessible and easily understandable in a single document, and requiring each authority to set out in one document what support and services it provides for children who have special needs, and the reasons for that pattern of provision, would mark a substantial improvement in the provision of services for children with special educational needs. It would also allow for comparisons of provision in different local authority areas.

# 1 Introduction

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1. In our report on Special Educational Needs published in July 2006, we recommended that assessment of need and funding of provision should no longer be carried out by the same body:

“There is an inbuilt conflict of interest in that it is the duty of the local authority both to assess the needs of the child and to arrange provision to meet those needs, and all within a limited resource. The link must be broken between assessment and funding of provision”.<sup>1</sup>

2. In its response the DfES rejected this recommendation, implying that the Committee had suggested that a new agency be created to make assessments (which it had not) or that there was no alternative to such an agency taking responsibility if local authorities were no longer to make assessments. It also made a series of other criticisms of the Committee’s recommendation, saying that to take such a decision would be “a leap in the dark and would endanger the position of parents and children with special educational needs”.<sup>2</sup>

3. We made it clear when the Government reply was published that we do not accept that separation of assessment and funding would inevitably require the establishment of a new agency or quango; that it would undermine the basis of the current statementing system; or that it would necessarily reduce local accountability for decisions, as the Government claims.

4. In an exchange between the Chairman of the Committee and the Minister of State for Schools during an Opposition Day debate on special needs on 30 January this year, the Minister agreed that if the Committee put forward proposals on the practicalities of implementing the separation of assessment from funding then he would reconsider the matter.<sup>3</sup> We therefore decided to examine this specific issue once again to see if we can formulate a solution or a series of options which would enable assessment of special needs to be separated from funding of provision.

5. When announcing the inquiry, we indicated that we would conduct it through written evidence alone and that we would not hold oral evidence sessions. This was because of the pressure of other inquiries and because we had so recently held an extensive series of meetings on the subject. When the DfES was split into two new departments, we had originally anticipated that there would be insufficient time for us to complete this inquiry and that we would ask our successors on the Children, Schools and Families Committee to do so. As the House of Commons has decided that the new Committee will not come into being until the beginning of the next parliamentary session, we are pleased that we have the opportunity to complete the task ourselves.

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1 Education and Skills Committee, Third Report of Session 2005–06, *Special Educational Needs*, HC 478–I, para 99.

2 Government Response to the Education and Skills Committee report on Special Educational Needs, Cm 6940, October 2006, page 5.

3 HC Deb, 30 January 2007, col 122.

6. We have received 60 memoranda for this inquiry, and we are grateful to all those who submitted evidence. They have all provided thoughtful contributions to the debate which we have considered carefully. All the memoranda have been posted on our website.<sup>4</sup>

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4 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmeduski/memo/specialedneeds/contents.htm>

## 2 Assessment and funding

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7. Given the Government's response to our original recommendation on separating assessment and funding of special needs provision, it is worth reiterating the reasons why we came to that conclusion in our previous report. They were encapsulated by Sean O'Sullivan, Deputy Head of a special school in Oxfordshire, in his memorandum to this follow-up inquiry:

“No matter how diligent an LA is in conducting honest assessments of children's special educational needs, the current system will inevitably lead to situations where families who are dissatisfied with the outcome will conclude that the assessment was tainted by the need to restrict costs. This does nothing for the credibility of the LA assessment process, and potentially leaves disgruntled families with lack of trust in local and national systems. The conflict this may lead to will do no good whatsoever for the individual child whose needs would probably end up unmet whilst a protracted dispute is played out. Much of the funding which should be shared amongst the children with special educational needs would instead be diverted to the costs of appeals and court cases.”<sup>5</sup>

8. We do not know how many families are in this position, but it is clear from our previous inquiry that for some this is a very serious problem. The Government appears to think that there is no case for changing the current system and that, even if there are problems, no better system is available or has been suggested. If there are intractable problems, however, and our original inquiry certainly suggested that there are, it really is not good enough for the Government to say that nothing more can be done.

9. We asked for views on four issues in particular:

- i. How might assessment of special educational needs be undertaken other than by the relevant local authority without the establishment of a new separate agency for the purpose?
- ii. How might local accountability for assessment be maintained if the local authority does not directly undertake the assessment?
- iii. What other issues need to be addressed in order to make the separation of assessment and provision effective?
- iv. What models from other countries could usefully be drawn on to demonstrate how separation of assessment and funding for special educational needs might be achieved?

10. Two contrasting positions emerge from the evidence. Those in favour of separating responsibility for assessment from responsibility for provision tend to:

- accept that there is a conflict of interest where the body responsible for assessment is also responsible for funding provision;

- see assessment as largely the responsibility of educational psychologists (EPs);
- see few problems in outsourcing assessment to EPs, some of whom already work independently of local authorities; and
- assume that funding would then follow the recommendations made as a result of assessment.

11. Those opposed to separating responsibility for assessment from responsibility for provision tend to:

- question whether there is a high level of dissatisfaction amongst parents;
- deny that there is a conflict of interest in practice (whilst acknowledging that there may be one in principle);
- point out that local authorities have to manage the system as a whole in the interests of all children;
- look to the integration of SEN assessment in wider-ranging multidisciplinary assessments within the Every Child Matters framework; and
- locate the source of problems in the SEN system in areas that would be untouched by a separation of provision and assessment responsibilities—chiefly, in a lack of overall funding and inadequate accountability at school level.

12. There is also a third position, which:

- accepts that there are problems in the current relation between assessment and provision functions, but does not see their total separation as a solution;
- places emphasis on confidence-building measures, especially with parents;
- places emphasis on improving the quality of what is provided by schools to build confidence and reduce the need for statements as protection; and
- argues that assessment processes can be made more transparent and independent within the overall framework of local authority responsibility.

## Separation of assessment and funding

13. What this exercise has shown is that, contrary to the Government's assertions, there are possible ways of separating the assessment of needs from the funding of provision without creating a new bureaucracy. Three of the possibilities suggested to us are set out below.

### *Assessments commissioned by Local Authorities or Children's Trusts*

14. It was suggested by some contributors that the key part of this process was to ensure that the right sort of assessment is undertaken. Therefore, so long as an appropriate assessment specification (including a broad range of professionals) is commissioned (this could be by the local authority or, perhaps more appropriately, the local Children's Trust), then it is not necessary for a local authority to be the default provider. In our judgment,

commissioning provides the most practical answer to the question of whether assessment and funding can be separated. It would allow the local authority or Trust to set a specification, tender for services on the basis of that specification and then performance manage the subsequent contract, thus distancing the ‘responsible body’ from the provider, enabling the LA to continue to act as funder. No new agency would be required, and the degree of local accountability would be the same as it is now.

### ***Delegating assessment to schools***

15. Jonathan Rix, from the Faculty of Education and Language Studies at the Open University, proposed a model where the assessment function (and funding for assessment) is delegated to groups of schools who combine to provide the resources available to ensure multi-agency assessment.<sup>6</sup> This model keeps the assessment at arms length from the LA, although it does then raise a question about quality assurance—the separation of assessment and funding could be seen to be weakened if the LA then quality assures the delegated assessment function. It does however provide a coherent alternative model, which draws in part on practice in the Netherlands.

16. Trevor Daniels, head of SEN for South Gloucestershire Council, said that separation might be done the other way round, with funding becoming entirely the responsibility of schools and assessment remaining with the local authority. With the vast majority of funding already delegated to schools, he argues that all that would be required would be to add transport for children with SEN to the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Schools Forum could be used to manage funding strategically.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Making educational psychology services more independent***

17. While assessment of need is not only a matter for educational psychologists, they do perform a key role. David Knapman, a Chartered Educational Psychologist, argued that

“[...] some educational psychology services may have become too closely enmeshed with their educational administrator colleagues, to the extent that some are headed by an officer who is also a psychologist. In short, the relationship between the two parties may have become too cosy. From the Committee’s point of view, it is not so much a matter of needing now to ‘privatise’ the psychological services as restoring a healthy ‘distance’ between them and their employers.”<sup>8</sup>

18. Mr Knapman suggests two possible solutions to this problem. One is for clear guidance from the DCSF to local authorities that educational psychologists must be allowed to make an unfettered professional judgement in each case (so that, for example, authorities could not instruct educational psychologists to make only general recommendations about a child needing extra support rather than specific recommendations about the type of support needed). The other is for the DCSF to fund local educational psychology services directly. The Government might consider that this offends against the injunction not to

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6 SEN 2

7 SEN 14

8 SEN 5

create a new quango; but it could be done by clusters of authorities pooling their services, for example. While detailed suggestions varied, others also considered that it would be relatively straightforward for educational psychologists to work at arms length from local authorities.<sup>9</sup> The main difficulty with pursuing this model would be devising a method of ensuring all the other agencies are included to provide a child with access to a multi-agency assessment, where required.

## Conclusions

19. One of the key issues in making provision for children with special educational needs is ensuring that parents have confidence that professionals are genuinely seeking to provide appropriate support for their children, a point that was made by many of those who submitted evidence. That was the basis for our previous recommendation. This does not mean that we are questioning the integrity of the professionals involved, as some of those who gave evidence suggested. It is rather that tensions in the system can give rise to mistrust, unfounded as it may be, which helps no one.

20. We have received in evidence a number of serious suggestions about how confidence in the process of addressing children's special needs might be improved through separating assessment from funding, some of which we have highlighted here. **We ask the Government to give a considered response to the proposals that we have discussed for separating assessment from funding, and to examine carefully their potential effectiveness in helping to enhance parental satisfaction with the way in which special needs are identified and addressed.**

## Wider issues

21. In our previous inquiry, we said that

“[...] it is important to recognise that many children [with special needs] are receiving the education they need in an appropriate setting. It is equally important, however, to highlight the difficulties faced by a large number of parents for whom the system is failing to meet the needs of their children.”<sup>10</sup>

22. We have found it instructive in this follow-up inquiry to focus on one particular issue in the provision of support for children with special needs, as it has brought out a number of key points about the difficulties some families face which need to be addressed in deciding how support is to be provided. For example, these messages were clear from the evidence:

- Assessment should be seen as a process not an event. It should not be seen solely in the context of the drafting of statements of need, but as part of a continuing attempt to ensure that all children receive support that is appropriate.
- Assessment is likely to involve a range of practitioners and is not restricted to educational psychologists, though their role is clearly important.

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, SEN 1 [Dr Simon Jenner] and SEN 10 [Chartered Educational Psychologists in Private Practice].

<sup>10</sup> Education and Skills Committee, *Special Educational Needs*, para 1.

- Making recommendations for support without reference to the resources that are available is liable to increase the tension between parents and local authorities. It is right that a child's needs should be assessed objectively, but support cannot be offered for those needs by assuming that cost is no object.
- Following on from that, transparency in the way the assessment is made and support is offered is vital if there is to be trust that service providers do have the interests of the child at heart and are not merely seeking to control costs.

23. It was interesting to note the range of respondents who disagreed with the idea that it would be helpful to separate responsibility for assessment from responsibility for funding. Local authorities which responded were generally against the idea, unsurprisingly, but a number of organisations seeking to promote the interest of children with particular needs—such as Afasic and TreeHouse—also cast doubt on whether that division would be appropriate.<sup>11</sup> This was not what we had anticipated. However, a number of those giving evidence argued that while they saw no real advantage in separating assessment and funding, assessment is increasingly likely to be undertaken by using the Common Assessment Framework for children's services generally rather than looking at educational needs in isolation, which would mark a significant change.

### **Common Assessment Framework**

24. The Common Assessment Framework has been designed to operate in the post-*Every Child Matters* world, where services are increasingly expected to be integrated:

“It is intended to provide a simple process for a holistic assessment of a child's needs and strengths, taking account of the role of parents, carers and environmental factors on their development. Practitioners will then be better placed to agree, with the child and family, about what support is appropriate. The CAF will also help to improve integrated working by promoting co-ordinated service provision.”<sup>12</sup>

25. The Audit Commission focused on this issue in its response to our inquiry. It argued that local authorities do not have an inherent conflict of interest when assessing and funding SEN, but seek to balance local interests, which it describes as being at the heart of all public sector decision-making.<sup>13</sup> Rather than separating assessment and funding, it advocates assessing educational needs alongside assessment for other services:

“Since the publication of the current SEN Code of Practice and the government's key SEN policy, *Every Child Matters*, and the Children Act 2004, there has been an outcome focused agenda for children with significant implications for the management of SEN. In particular, the new integrated approach to service delivery requires holistic assessments of need in relation to the outcomes framework: being healthy; being safe; enjoying and achieving; making a personal contribution; and achieving economic well-being. These developments reflect the observation from our 2002 report *Statutory assessment and statements of SEN: in need of review?* that

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11 SEN 26, para 7, and SEN 55, para 7.

12 <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/delivering-services/caf/>

13 SEN 28, para 4.

unified children's services, with a shared budget, would create the potential for more joined-up planning. Much of the evidence offered to the Select Committee on SEN in September 2005 reflected the experience of parents and others during a period before the full implementation of the Every Child Matters agenda.”<sup>14</sup>

26. To achieve this aim of joined-up planning, the Audit Commission is clear that the logic of these holistic assessments and the establishment of Children's Trusts across the country is that there should be a change in the way special educational needs are assessed and funded.

“We [...] would wish to see both the assessment and funding of SEN as part of the work of the [Children's] Trust. Indeed, withdrawing the SEN assessment function from the local authority and establishing a comprehensive assessment function for children within the Trust, with an associated pooled budget for provision, would encourage inter-agency collaboration, promote consistency of approach and provide the existing, accountable body the Select Committee seeks to carry out the assessment function. The local Children's Trust draws together, in partnership, all of the local agencies, including the area's maintained schools, to provide a coordinated vision and strategy for local children. Indeed, key shortcomings of the SEN framework [...] can be addressed by Children's Trust arrangements. Moreover, the Trust is not only expected to consult widely with local children and young people, parents and carers and other stakeholders, it is expected to have proper representation of children and young people, parents and carers and service users within its governance arrangements.

“The Children's Trust is, therefore, the obvious location for an assessment function that focuses on meeting the needs of the child within the local context of provision, making best use of all available resources with accountability to local people through the established democratic system.”<sup>15</sup>

27. The development of the Common Assessment Framework as a means of assessing special educational needs was advocated, or acknowledged as likely to be a significant development, by a number of contributors, from local authorities,<sup>16</sup> support groups,<sup>17</sup> professional organisations<sup>18</sup> and academics.<sup>19</sup> **We ask the Government to tell us how it anticipates the increased use of the Common Assessment Framework and the continued development of Children's Trusts will impact on assessment of special educational needs, what advice it is giving on the use of the Common Assessment Framework for assessing special educational needs, and what implications it considers this will have for the statementing process.**

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14 *ibid*, para 27.

15 *ibid*, para 39 to 40.

16 Northumberland County Council (SEN 3), Devon County Council (SEN 15).

17 Afasic (SEN 26), I CAN (SEN 37)

18 nasen (SEN 36), NAHT (SEN 46)

19 SEN Policy Options Group (SEN 19), Dr Barbara Pavey (SEN 58)

## Funding

28. Funding is clearly a vital issue. The National Autistic Society argued that, while separation of funding and assessment would remove conflict and might aid accountability, “It will not address issues of how local authorities then allocate limited funds”.<sup>20</sup> TreeHouse told us that “there needs to be far greater transparency in the system around funding”.<sup>21</sup> They added:

“Local authorities need to ensure that the parents of all children who have been identified as needing Early Years/School Action, Early Years/School Action Plus or who have a statement are aware of the budgetary provision delegated to the school/setting to meet special educational needs. Clear advice should be given about and what schools should be doing with the delegated funding in order to meet the special educational needs of the children on their roll.”<sup>22</sup>

29. Others were concerned that with SEN budgets delegated to schools, and with those budgets not being ring-fenced, there was a lack of certainty that money designed to be spent on special needs would be spent in that way.<sup>23</sup> The Children’s Services Development Group, speaking for independent providers, also had concerns:

“Whilst not proposing to challenge current Government policy of funding schools directly, clearly there must be a more effective way of managing funding streams for children deemed to have special educational needs, especially those with low incidence needs which cannot appropriately be provided within the local authority. Numbers of such children can be estimated reasonably accurately, and budgets to purchase such services can be planned. Clearly if a child leaves mainstream schooling, then funding should follow that child. The costs of a placement in an independent setting (or even one in a special school in the maintained sector) should be based on need, quality and value for money.”<sup>24</sup>

30. In our previous report, we concluded that before increasing the level of delegated funding to schools for SEN provision, other conditions needed to be met, such as a clearer national framework for provision, a broad range of suitable provision in each local authority area, and a better trained workforce.<sup>25</sup> In its response, the Government did not comment specifically on our reservations, other than to say the extent of delegation of funding to schools was a matter for an authority and its Schools Forum to decide.<sup>26</sup> While that is no doubt technically accurate, the Government must surely be concerned to ensure that funding designed to support children with special needs is spent appropriately and is not merely absorbed into general schools’ funding.

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20 SEN 54, summary

21 SEN 55, para 2

22 *ibid*, para 14.

23 For example Nicola D’Aeth [SEN 7], SouthEast/South Central Group of Parent Partnership Officers [SEN 11].

24 SEN 13

25 Education and Skills Committee, *Special Educational Needs*, para 236.

26 Government Response to the Education and Skills Committee report on Special Educational Needs, page 59.

31. In the run up to the publication of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review [CSR], the then DfES and the Treasury conducted a joint review of support for disabled children and their families.<sup>27</sup> In the CSR document published on 9 October 2007, the Government said that it intended to spend £340 million over the CSR period to give additional support to those children and young people.<sup>28</sup> The outcome of the review for children with special needs more widely are not yet clear. **We ask the Government to make an early statement on how the money from the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review will be used to improve services for all children and young people with special needs, and the guidance that it will be giving to local authorities and schools to ensure that money provided for special needs is spent on special needs.**

### *Support and services for children with special needs*

32. One of the main recommendations of our previous report was that there ought to be a national strategy for special needs provision within which individual local authorities and schools would be free to make provision suitable for their circumstances. This should be achieved by bringing together the various codes of practice and sets of guidance that exist for different sectors to give a unified framework.<sup>29</sup> We also recommended that each local authority should produce a provision map, setting out the services and support that schools and other providers across each area ought to be making available. We said that “One of the key benefits would be to ensure that every local authority maintains a broad range of flexible provision—including special schools.”<sup>30</sup>

33. The Government in its reply said that the various documents we had suggested should be combined had different purposes and that a single framework based on them would either be too general or too comprehensive to be workable.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, and confusingly, it said that a national framework with local flexibility was desirable.<sup>32</sup> It did not explicitly respond to our call for a provision map in each area, but its outline of what parents should expect to be provided set out the level of detail that such a map would need to contain.<sup>33</sup>

34. This returns us to the issue of transparency, which so many of the contributors to the inquiry said was needed. The National Autistic Society told us:

“Local authorities have a requirement to publish information on SEN provision, including what support will be provided by the authority and what schools are expected to provide from their delegated budgets. This information must be easily available and accessible to parents, and sufficiently clear to enable them to identify

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27 *Aiming high for disabled children: better support for families*, HM Treasury/ DfES, May 2007.

28 *Meeting the Aspirations of the British People*, 2007 Pre-Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review, Cm 7227, 9 October 2007, para D1.8.

29 Education and Skills Committee, *Special Educational Needs*, paras 253 to 259.

30 *ibid*, para 267.

31 Government Response to the Education and Skills Committee report on Special Educational Needs, page 57

32 *ibid*, page 7.

33 *ibid*, page 16.

what resources their child should be entitled to through delegated budgets, and hold the school to account.”<sup>34</sup>

The evidence we received suggested that these requirements are not being met, or not met often enough.

35. Given the experience of our previous inquiry, we do not believe that a national framework for special needs provision and publication of provision maps for each area would be a panacea and instantly end the difficulties and conflicts between parents and local authorities. They would, however, provide clear information about what authorities and schools were or were not offering, and so help to manage expectations. The Audit Commission in their evidence provided a table to illustrate their point that “Parents have to negotiate contrasting perspectives and sometimes conflicting conceptual frameworks in coming to their decisions about how best to meet their child’s needs”.<sup>35</sup> One example they provide of such competing conceptual frameworks, which in our view helps to demonstrate why there is often conflict between parents and authorities, is:

“Maximum intervention: providing as much help as practicable, or the most intensive help, with the idea of overcoming a difficulty as quickly as possible.

Proportionate intervention: identifying the minimum support necessary to enable children to function independently or to take the next step.”<sup>36</sup>

It can be imagined that in many cases authorities are seeking to provide what they consider to be ‘proportionate’ intervention, but parents, for perfectly understandable reasons, are seeking ‘maximum’ intervention for their children.

**36. We ask the Government to revisit its response to our previous report and to make explicit commitments to provide a national framework for special educational needs and to require local authorities to publish provision maps for each area.** On the basis of its previous response, the Government appears to agree with both of these suggestions, but shies away from making clear public statements about them. **Making the requirements that are placed on authorities and providers explicit, easily accessible and easily understandable in a single document, and requiring each authority to set out in one document what support and services it provides for children who have special needs, and the reasons for that pattern of provision, would mark a substantial improvement in the provision of services for children with special educational needs. It would also allow for comparisons of provision in different local authority areas.**

## Conclusions

37. The original purpose of this inquiry was to look at the issue of the separation of assessment and funding, but we have addressed a wider range of issues in this report

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34 SEN 54, para 21

35 SEN 28, table 1

36 *ibid*

because the evidence has drawn us back to matters we discussed in our original report on special educational needs.

38. We have satisfied ourselves that assessment and funding could be separated without causing damage to the current system of special needs provision, and we ask the Government to examine what has been proposed very carefully. By looking at the issue of assessment, however, we have been led to consider the way in which the new collaborative working that is being brought in under Every Child Matters is likely to impact on special educational needs provision. This has led us to conclude that what we should be seeking is incremental improvement in some very important areas, specifically:

- extending promising current practice, such as confidence-building with parents, assessment handled at arms length by multi-stakeholder panels, and the involvement of diverse assessment providers;
- reviewing other aspects of the SEN system that cause concern, such as the quality of school provision, the lack of accountability for schools, and the lack of a national framework against which provision can be judged.

39. We do not suggest that the changes that we have been discussing in this report would lead to a revolution in special needs provision, or that all of the problems with special needs provision that we discussed in our previous report would be resolved if those changes were implemented. We do believe, however, that they would provide clarity on some currently very confused issues, give a large number of parents a much better idea of what support their children might reasonably expect to receive, and help to build and maintain confidence that the aim of all those concerned is to provide the best possible support and education for some of the most vulnerable children.

# Conclusions and recommendations

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## Separation of assessment and funding

1. We ask the Government to give a considered response to the proposals that we have discussed for separating assessment from funding, and to examine carefully their potential effectiveness in helping to enhance parental satisfaction with the way in which special needs are identified and addressed. (Paragraph 20)

## Wider issues

2. We ask the Government to tell us how it anticipates the increased use of the Common Assessment Framework and the continued development of Children's Trusts will impact on assessment of special educational needs, what advice it is giving on the use of the Common Assessment Framework for assessing special educational needs, and what implications it considers this will have for the statementing process. (Paragraph 27)
3. We ask the Government to make an early statement on how the money from the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review will be used to improve services for all children and young people with special needs, and the guidance that it will be giving to local authorities and schools to ensure that money provided for special needs is spent on special needs. (Paragraph 31)
4. We ask the Government to revisit its response to our previous report and to make explicit commitments to provide a national framework for special educational needs and to require local authorities to publish provision maps for each area. (Paragraph 36)
5. Making the requirements that are placed on authorities and providers explicit, easily accessible and easily understandable in a single document, and requiring each authority to set out in one document what support and services it provides for children who have special needs, and the reasons for that pattern of provision, would mark a substantial improvement in the provision of services for children with special educational needs. It would also allow for comparisons of provision in different local authority areas. (Paragraph 36)

# Formal minutes

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**Wednesday 17 October 2007**

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr Douglas Carswell  
Mr David Chaytor  
Paul Holmes

Fiona Mactaggart  
Stephen Williams

## ***Special Educational Needs: Assessment and Funding***

The Committee considered this matter.

Draft Report, proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 39 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Tenth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

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[Adjourned till Wednesday 24 October at 9.15 am

## List of written evidence

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Written evidence has been published on our website at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmmeduski/memo/specialedneeds/contents.htm>

SEN 01	Dr Simon Jenner, Principal Educational Psychologist, Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
SEN 02	Jonathan Rix, Centre for Curriculum and Teaching Studies, Open University
SEN 03	Northumberland County Council's Family and Children's Trust
SEN 04	Mrs Sharon Tringham
SEN 05	Mr David Knapman, Independent Chartered Educational Psychologist
SEN 06	Ruth McGoldrick
SEN 07	Nicola D'Aeth, Principal Educational Psychologist, Hounslow
SEN 08	Judith Cameron, Principal Manager, Integrated Services, Newham CYPS
SEN 09	Sean O'Sullivan, Deputy Headteacher, Frank Wise School, Oxon
SEN 10	Chartered Educational Psychologists in Independent Practice (CEPIP)
SEN 11	South/East South Central Regional Group of Parent Partnership Officers
SEN 12	The Educational Guidance Service Ltd
SEN 13	Children's Services Development Group (CSDG)
SEN 14	Trevor Daniels, Head of SEN, Gloucestershire Council
SEN 15	Inclusive Education Strategy Group, Devon County Council
SEN 16	Nottinghamshire Dyslexia Association (NDA)
SEN 17	Julie Maynard and Allan Willis
SEN 18	Dr David Bishop-Rowe, Principal, Sutton School and Specialist College, Dudley
SEN 19	SEN Policy Options Group
SEN 20	John Smith, Chair of the SEN Inclusion Sub-Committee of the Northern Council of Education Authorities
SEN 21	Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities
SEN 22	Janet Sparrow, Children and Young People's Services, Buckinghamshire County Council
SEN 23	Birmingham City Council
SEN 24	National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS)
SEN 25	Michele Rose, SEN Group Manager, Somerset County Council
SEN 26	Afasic
SEN 27	Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)
SEN 28	The Audit Commission
SEN 29	Robert Buckland, Swindon SEN Network
SEN 31	Education Walsall, part of Serco Group plc
SEN 32	Scope
SEN 33	John Wright
SEN 34	Supporting Together Those with Autism and Aspergers in Redbridge (STAAR)
SEN 35	Deirdre Holland, Chair, Swindon Dyslexia Association
SEN 36	nasen

- SEN 37 I CAN
- SEN 38 Mrs Eirwen Grenfell-Essam, Chair, Network 81
- SEN 39 Caroline Gray, Director, ACE Centre Advisory Trust
- SEN 40 British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)
- SEN 41 Warwickshire Local Authority
- SEN 42 Dr Harriet Martin, Head of Psychology, Assessment and Intervention, Luton Borough Council
- SEN 43 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- SEN 44 Dolphin Computer Access Ltd
- SEN 45 Telford and Wrekin Council
- SEN 46 National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
- SEN 47 Surrey County Council
- SEN 48 Local Government Association (LGA)
- SEN 49 National Parent Partnership Network (NPPN)
- SEN 50 National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
- SEN 51 Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)
- SEN 52 Independent Panel for Special Education Advice (IPSEA)
- SEN 53 Special Educational Consortium
- SEN 54 National Autistic Society (NAS)
- SEN 55 TreeHouse
- SEN 56 iansyst Ltd
- SEN 57 Campaign for State Education (CASE)
- SEN 58 Dr Barbara Pavey
- SEN 59 Councillor Packham, Newcastle City Council
- SEN 60 John Bangs, Assistant Secretary, Education and Equal Opportunities, National Union of Teachers (NUT)

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

### Session 2006–07

First Report	The Work of the Committee in 2005–06	HC 301
Second Report	Citizenship Education	HC 147 (HC 517)
Third Report	Bullying	HC 85 (HC 600)
Fourth Report	The Bologna Process	HC 205 (HC 788)
Fifth Report	14–19 Diplomas	HC 249 (HC 1033)
Sixth Report	The Work of Ofsted	HC 165 (HC 1033)
Seventh Report	Sustainable Schools: <i>Are we building schools for the future?</i>	HC 140-I and II (HC 1078)
Eighth Report	The future sustainability of the higher education sector: international aspects	HC 285-I and II (HC 1033)
Ninth Report	Post-16 Skills	HC 333-I and II

### Session 2005–06

First Report	Schools White Paper: <i>Higher Standards, Better Schools For All</i>	HC 633-I and II (Cm 6747)
Second Report	Public Expenditure on Education and Skills	HC 479 (HC 1132)
Third Report	Special Educational Needs	HC 478-I, II and III (Cm 6940)
Fourth Report	Further Education	HC 649 (HC 1712)
Fifth Report	Public Expenditure	HC 1201 (HC 211)