The Inclusion Journal - Issue 1.1

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Blogs

Social Inclusion for Social Mobility – A New Way of Thinking

Editorial for the first issue of The Inclusion Journal. Sonia Blandford of the AFA explains why social mobility is important for vulnerable children

It is time to challenge the injustice of the current prevailing view of social mobility, that the vulnerable and disadvantaged have somehow failed and they should become more middle class, pass the required number of exams followed by university. In contrast we should reflect on the thinking and action needed to change if every child is to be included, regardless of their background, challenge or need. I argue that our change-making focus must be upon the following:

Improving Early years provision: In England, Sure Start Children's Centres were the main vehicles for ensuring excellent quality family services and provision were located in accessible places and welcoming to all. The aim for every Sure Start Centre was to improve outcomes for all children and families. There are some fine nursery settings that take that approach today. If we want all families to fully participate in early years we need to share the benefits of early years education by building a respectful relationship with families to help ensure growth and school readiness.

Building a relevant curriculum: Pupils who have barriers put before them will never succeed. The school curriculum needs to be relevant and attainable, not divisive. To succeed in school every child needs to be included. A curriculum that is not socially and culturally relevant, and which presents more barriers than opportunities simply will not engage children in learning.

The current national curriculum in England is cast in a middle-class mould. There are solutions to this dilemma that, if implemented, would address the needs of all children. The first is to break down the barriers to learning by providing opportunities for all children to participate in social and cultural activities, sport, the arts, debating, volunteering, wider community-based provision, museums, trips and much more.

The second requires us to relate the curriculum to the social context of the child and their future. All communities have a rich heritage, which can provide significant resources. In terms of their future, learning about the workplace can begin in primary school, increasing ambitions, breaking down barriers, and providing relevance to learning. Increasing access to learning for all children should be the benchmark of a successful school. A considered, realistic approach to improving outcomes for all pupils is needed, using evidence-based programmes such as Achievement for All to provide support for leaders and teachers at this critical time. The gap has been closed where this support has been embedded.

Improving teaching: The need to understand how and why children can learn is fundamental to pedagogy – to understand how teachers teach. Getting teaching right for the vulnerable and disadvantaged remains an ongoing challenge in many schools. An appropriate starting point would be to increase understanding of how disadvantaged children and those identified with special educational needs or disabilities learn and refocus teacher and professional training on the majority of the population in schools, identifying what is needed to prepare children for work. It is also about changing the

mindset of the adults and services around the school to improve the outcomes for all children. I have long since known that if you change the attitudes and behaviours of adults you improve the attitudes and behaviours of the child.

Widening our focus to ask why success is only measured by exam results? The annual media frenzy that follows primary phase national curriculum assessments (SATs) and secondary phase GCSE exam results only serves to remind most vulnerable and disadvantaged children they have failed to achieve government expected levels. EPI's Closing the Gap research6 reminds us that it will take decades to close the gap, which includes reference to special educational needs. A more meaningful assessment at secondary phase would be destination outcomes: measuring student's outcomes by where the examinations take them. This would be complementary to recent research and theory on the changing skill needs of business and industry.

Consider the future that children and young people will live in...

The Problems of Designing a Future

It is very difficult to predict — especially the future-Commonly attributed to Neils Bohr (Physicist). Quite simply, we cannot design an education system that would preempt the challenges of the future. If we attempted to do this, the only resource available to us is our understanding of now, projected forward. History demonstrates that this resource will always be insufficient for the task: even the best-informed projection will be wrong, to a greater or lesser degree. For example, in 1964, the writer Arthur C. Clark predicted with alarming accuracy the online world of 2014 and changes to employment. However, Clark also predicted with equal confidence the universal delegation of manual work to trained chimpanzees.

The best evidence we have suggests that the most effective support that we can give to young people to meet the challenges of tomorrow is to embed pedagogies and practice that could be described as future-aware. Future-aware pedagogies support young people to develop the mindset, capacities, and characteristics required to meet new challenges as they arise, and on their own terms. These include:

1. Effective collaboration
2. Being able to reflect on, and extend knowledge
3. Self-regulation and self-development
4. Research and problem-solving skills
5. Effective use of technology
6. Communication
7. Creativity and innovation
8. Metacognition
9. Grit and resilience

These pedagogies underpin the need to build the core strength of every child or young person. Core strength, defined as a future-aware concept is the confidence and ability to learn, develop and participate in society, where children and young people are supported to identify themselves in terms of: Aspiration, I CAN; Access, I DO; Attainment, I HAVE and Achievement, I AM.

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Inclusion

A Salutary Tale Of Two Neuro-Diverse, and Socially Diverse, Boys

Professor Amanda Kirby explores how confirmation bias - the tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting information that is consistent with one's existing beliefs - can lead to the mis-diagnosis and response to children, often limiting their life-chances.

Confirmation bias in decision making is largely unintentional and often results in ignoring some information. Existing beliefs can include one's expectations in a given situation and predictions about a particular outcome.

People are especially likely to process information to support their own beliefs when the issue is highly important or self-relevant.

When we see a young person in school or the community and they are having challenges with learning impacting on their behaviour, we can draw conclusions which may come from a limited set of information. How we view the young person may also be influenced by training and experiences that we have had.

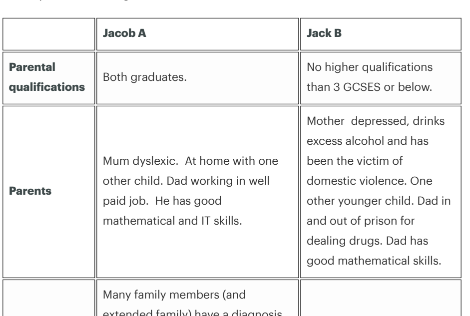
Time pressures and a lack of knowledge have also been cited by teachers as factors which negatively influence the ability to support pupils for example with ADHD.[1] In one study where referrals of 'Children in Care' and adopted children were referred to a specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) team , they found under-diagnosis of common Neuro developmental Disorders (NDDs) and mental health conditions but over-diagnosis of attachment disorder.[2]

There had been an assumption, because they were in care, that their challenges were all related to attachment and Neurodevelopmental Disorders had been overlooked.

Checking out our assumptions

Having the ability and opportunity to gather information allows us to consider the different potential conclusions.

Let's start by looking at Jack. He was born in April 2007. Read the following box and write some notes about your initial thoughts about Jack and his challenges. At this point you only have this information.



What did you think?

In reality these are two children born on the same day but in two very different places by two sets of very different parents in the UK . Jacob is from Marlow and Jack from Middlesbrough. When you start comparing the two boys you start to see the same presenting challenges in school but potentially very different interpretations.

Additionally, there are huge differences in their lives.

	Jacob A	Jack B
Parental qualifications	Both graduates.	No higher qualifications than 3 GCSES or below.
Parents	Mum dyslexic. At home with one other child. Dad working in well paid job. He has good mathematical and IT skills.	Mother depressed, drinks excess alcohol and has been the victim of domestic violence. One other younger child. Dad in and out of prison for dealing drugs. Dad has good mathematical skills.
Family History	Many family members (and extended family) have a diagnosis or symptoms of signs of Developmental Coordination Disorder, Dyslexia, ADHD and Autism.	Depression, Anxiety, Substance misuse.
Child in Care	No	Several times.
Nutrition	Well balanced meals. Fresh fruit and vegetable every day including a 'Smoothie at breakfast'. Omega 3 and multi-vitamin supplementation each day.	Often misses breakfast. Only likes one type of sweetened cereal. No fish in diet. Mainly brown and processed food. Fruit once or twice a week. On Free School Meals.
Home	2 computers, 2 I-Pads, 2 TVs, 2 smart phones. Garden has climbing frame, and football goal. 100+ books of all types. Parents read every day with Jack, Lego, creative play, plays Minecraft. Lots of craft activities at home. Eats at the meal table every day.	1 TV and 1 Pay -as- you- go Smartphone. School book only at home. Mum has difficulties reading and spelling. Child loves playing on cousin's computer on Minecraft. No table to eat at.
School	School has forest school, is a Microsoft Academy, and won an award for nutritious school meals.	Inner city school on Special Measures. 50% of children have been excluded at one point.[3]
EHCP	Has a diagnosis of Autism, Developmental Language Disorder, Developmental Coordination Disorder(DCD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.	Has a diagnosis of SEMH (Social and Emotional and Mental Health) Been excluded twice. On 3 year waiting list for ADHD assessment .
Jack in class	Top in the school in a computer Maths game. Has TA support one-to- one for 20 hours per week. Has SALT, and OT support.	Difficulties with reading. Been in specialist unit for 'SEMH' because of disruptive behaviour. No SALT. EP monitoring.

Jacob and Jack live very different lives there is no doubt. However, their challenges presented in school are the same but the interpretation has been different resulting in different outcomes. Their lives differ in so many ways that can impact on their learning outcomes. This includes the daily patterns and habits such as the opportunity to read and have conversation, a table to sit at and nutritious food to eat, outdoor space to play and computer access to play and learn.

Jack's Mum has had to survive on very little money, with her partner in and out of prison. There is an example of intergenerational impact. Jack's mum left school at 16 years with no qualifications and low literacy skills. She is concerned for Jack, but doesn't know how to access help or what there is. She has no internet access apart from her phone and low digital skills. She is, not surprisingly, depressed and because of her poor self-care Jack has gone into foster care for periods of time in the last couple of years.

Jack's father is one of the one-in-three in prison[7] who has also undiagnosed ADHD and long- term dependency on a variety of illegal substances. His impulsive behaviour and addictive nature has got him into trouble. If you met him you would say he was bright and articulate but gets frustrated and has hit Jack's mother a number of times.

In school Jack gets frustrated in class as he doesn't always understand what is being asked of him. This results in him being disruptive. His social skills are poor and his speech is not always clear. His reading and writing is falling further behind during this last year. He has few friends and intermittent schooling has made him even more isolated.

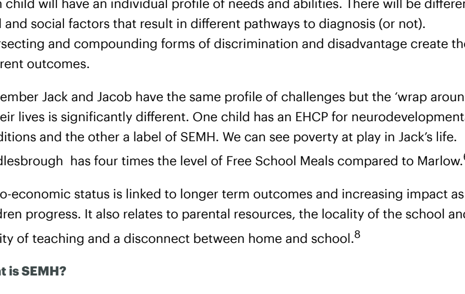
Jacob's life is very different. He has educated parents whose nursery alerted them to Jacob's speech and language delay. They sought information and were able to navigate the system and gained an early and comprehensive diagnosis for Jacob.

They have got professional help for him. He is at a primary school with a forest school and with an impressive computer access.

He has an Educational Health Care Plan. He has time allocated with a teaching assistant who helps him navigate times of change in class and keeps him on task and reinforcing positive social interactions that he has difficulty with.

Without this help Jacob can be very disruptive to others in class. During Covid-19 he has gone into school for some of the sessions and been using the computer even more at home and learned to code. He has also become top in his school for an online maths game. This has changed the school's perception of him and can see he has some real talents in mathematics and IT.

Different balls in the bucket?



If we use an analogy of balls in the bucket which represent different strengths and challenges in the young person's life we sometimes only view balls of a certain colour. We give a diagnosis only when a threshold is reached. Taking a dichotomous approach rather than starting with a needs assessment means that some children miss out on support as they are not 'bad enough'.

Creating a young person's profile

Each child will have an individual profile of needs and abilities. There will be different local and social factors that result in different pathways to diagnosis (or not). Intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination and disadvantage create these different outcomes.

Remember Jack and Jacob have the same profile of challenges but the 'wrap around' in their lives is significantly different. One child has an EHCP for neurodevelopmental conditions and the other a label of SEMH. We can see poverty at play in Jack's life. Middlesbrough has four times the level of Free School Meals compared to Marlow.[6]

Socio-economic status is linked to longer term outcomes and increasing impact as children progress. It also relates to parental resources, the locality of the school and quality of teaching and a disconnect between home and school.[8]

What is SEMH?

Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs has been defined as a type of special educational needs in which children/young people have severe challenges in managing their emotions and behaviour. They often show inappropriate responses and feelings to situations.

Some characteristics of children with SEMH may include:-

- **Disruptive, antisocial and uncooperative behaviour**
- **Temper tantrums**
- **Frustration, anger and verbal and physical threats / aggression**
- **Withdrawn and depressed attitudes**
- **Anxiety and self-harm**
- **Stealing**
- **Truancy**
- **Substance misuse**

Have Jack's challenges been viewed as 'behaviours' and assumed to be more associated with the external factors than potentially related to neurodiversity as well ?

Children born in Middlesbrough are more likely to be absent from school than national and regional averages and more likely to be excluded from school. Fourty percent of children who are in local authority care have Special Educational Needs (SEN), 20% have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

If we miss vital information we can end up drawing the wrong conclusions. Interestingly, when we look at data from children who have an Education, Health Care Plan and compare those in care from the mainstream population we can see significant differences in their diagnosis.[4,5]

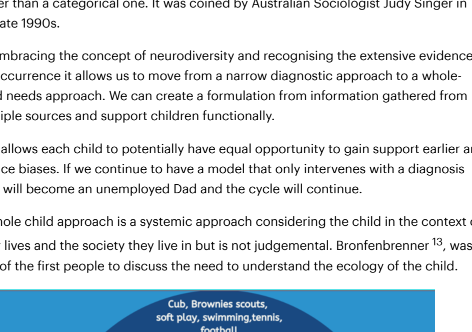
	Children in care with EHCP[4]	All children
Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder	12%	29%
SEMH	40%	12%
Speech, Language, Communication challenges	9%	15%

Why should it be that Jack is more likely to get a diagnosis of SEMH rather than Autism or Speech Language and communication challenges ?There is good evidence of higher rates of neurodiversity among children excluded from school like Jack but usually no routine screening for these traits.

In one study of excluded children the rate of ASD was 20 x the national average[9]. In the large- scale longitudinal study in Avon ALSPAC cohort of those excluded by age 8 years, 19% had ADHD and 23% had language development in bottom 10%.[10]

In an older study a sample of pupils who had been permanently excluded pupils from thirty-three Sheffield secondary schools found that 76% were ≥2 years behind their peers in reading.[11] Despite extensive evidence of co-occurrence between conditions and this also interlinked with adversity we often still seek single diagnoses for children who have intersecting challenges.[12]

Considering neurodiversity as a concept



Note: FASD, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder; TBI, Traumatic Brain Injury; APD, Auditory Processing Disorder.

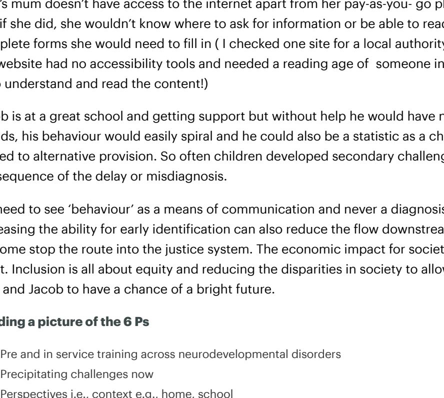
A picture of neurodiversity

This term recognises the fact that our brains (neuro-) naturally vary from person to person (are diverse) and are a part of human variation. It takes a dimensional approach rather than a categorical one. It was coined by Australian Sociologist Judy Singer in the late 1990s.

By embracing the concept of neurodiversity and recognising the extensive evidence of co-occurrence it allows us to move from a narrow diagnostic approach to a whole-child needs approach. We can create a formulation from information gathered from multiple sources and support children functionally.

This allows each child to potentially have equal opportunity to gain support earlier and reduce biases. If we continue to have a model that only intervenes with a diagnosis Jack will become an unemployed Dad and the cycle will continue.

A whole child approach is a systemic approach considering the child in the context of their lives and the society they live in but is not judgemental. Bronfenbrenner [13], was one of the first people to discuss the need to understand the ecology of the child.



Bronfenbrenner ecological systems

The cost for families and to society

Jack's mum doesn't have access to the internet apart from her pay-as-you- go phone and if she did, she wouldn't know where to ask for information or be able to read or complete forms she would need to fill in (I checked one site for a local authority and the website had no accessibility tools and needed a reading age of someone in Year 12 to understand and read the content!)

Jacob is at a great school and getting support but without help he would have no friends, his behaviour would easily spiral and he could also be a statistic as a child moved to alternative provision. So often children developed secondary challenges as a consequence of the delay or misdiagnosis.

We need to see 'behaviour' as a means of communication and never a diagnosis. Increasing the ability for early identification can also reduce the flow downstream and for some stop the route into the justice system. The economic impact for society is great. Inclusion is all about equity and reducing the disparities in society to allow both Jack and Jacob to have a chance of a bright future.

Building a picture of the 6 Ps

1. Pre and in service training across neurodevelopmental disorders
2. Precipitating challenges now
3. Perspectives i.e., context e.g., home, school
4. Predisposition to increased risk of 'fall out' from past and present events e.g., ACEs, illness, loss, LACYP, trauma and head injury.
5. Protective factors e.g., scaffolds in place, parental support, intervention, improved nutrition.
6. Positive factors e.g., strengths, resilience, self-esteem, peers.

Professor Amanda Kirby is CEO of Do-IT Solutions. Until recently she held a chair in developmental disorders at the University of South Wales. She is a qualified GP and worked for some years in adult psychiatry.

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Creative Teaching & Learning

Bridging the 'Word Gap' – It Takes A Whole Community To Help A Child

Equipping pupils with the language needed to fully engage both in their lessons and with each other as they move into secondary school is vital for their success. While some may see language and vocabulary as a task for English teachers to tackle alone, in fact it must be a whole community effort, argues Alix Robertson

Moving from primary to secondary school is an important chapter in every child's life, but alongside a wealth of opportunities it also brings new challenges. As a former English teacher and Year 7 form tutor, I know how this transition can impact on pupils. I have supported children grappling with moving from the comfortable, safe space of their primary school to a much bigger setting where navigating the campus alone can be daunting.

New research from Oxford University Press (OUP) and the Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) reveals that 87% of teachers are concerned that increasing academic requirements at transition from primary to secondary school highlight pupils' difficulties with language.

This increased additional workload brings exposure to up to four times as much new vocabulary, and for pupils with a 'word gap' (vocabulary that is below age-related expectations) these demands pose significant problems.

Young people who experience a 'word gap' are at risk of lower academic achievements that can impact future employment prospects, and four out of five teachers believe that difficulties with vocabulary lead to a lowering of pupils' self-esteem. These problems can increase poor behaviour and, further down the line, the risk of dropping out of education altogether.

On top of this challenge, 92% of teachers participating in the new research believe that this 'word gap' has widened further this year, following school closures brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, 94% have reported finding it challenging to support pupils' vocabulary development while teaching remotely. Overall, 75% think that school closures during lockdown will contribute to an increase in the number of pupils with a vocabulary deficit.

Connection and collaboration

Despite these issues, OUP and CfEY's new report 'Bridging the Word Gap at Transition' highlights approaches school leaders, teachers and parents can take to help to young people succeed. While there are a range of different strategies that individuals can consider, the underlying theme is the importance of connections and collaboration. Whether this is between primary and secondary schools, or between teachers and parents, these links are key in maximising the positive impact on young people's language learning.

Beginning at leadership level, improved partnerships between primary and secondary level are vital to ensure pupils have the vocabulary they need to make a success of transition. These links create continuity of curricula, giving primary teachers a better insight into required subject-specific or academic vocabulary and helping secondary teachers to learn from approaches that have been deployed successfully at primary level, as well as spot gaps where they can offer extra support. Schools at both levels should also plan vocabulary alongside the curriculum for all subjects, so that it builds up cumulatively through the years.

At Greenshaw High School in Sutton, Jane Wilson, Head of Transition, visits feeder primaries to speak to incoming Year 6 pupils about secondary school, alongside the school's Heads of Key Stage 3 English, maths and science who aim to learn what has been taught so far and how. This information is then mapped onto Greenshaw's Key Stage 3 curriculum.

The process helps to reduce duplication in content, allowing teachers to pitch their expectations appropriately so the school can pick up "where primary schools have left off". When new pupils arrive at Greenshaw in Year 7, they also sit reading tests which, alongside Key Stage 2 results, help to identify how to target additional support in areas such as vocabulary.

Styles of language

At classroom teacher level, explicit teaching of different styles of language, such as formal and informal, can help pupils to identify appropriate registers and use them successfully, depending on the context, task and audience. Teachers can model and promote rich, complex, specialist vocabulary and encourage word swaps in their dialogue with pupils, for example using the word 'discovered' rather than 'found'.

Contributing to the research, Malcolm Richards, Director of The Culture Yard CIC Ltd and educator, explained how his experience of working in an urban secondary school in London with multi-ethnic, multi-lingual students, highlighted the importance of supporting young people's ability to switch between different 'codes' or language registers, with the right guidance and support.

He said: "It was always really interesting to see the tensions between the language that the were using in their ordinary discourse and the language of instruction, which is the formal English used in lessons. Many young people use this technique of code switching in order to engage with curriculum resources and to adhere to the rules and regulations of the school site.

If you've got the language of instruction, then you have an advantage. If you don't have that language of instruction, then you are always going to be at a disadvantage in terms of the assessments and outcomes that generally education measures."

Open conversations

Another important approach is to increase pupils' awareness of synonyms, in order to help them understand the nuances and subtleties of vocabulary. One way teachers can do this is by visually mapping the meaning-based connections between words and phrases. Presenting a new word in a visually engaging way can help pupils to secure and retain their knowledge of that word. Teachers can support this learning with open conversations with pupils about their changing vocabulary needs, to ensure each child is receiving help in the right areas. Another helpful approach is to share word lists with pupils and their parents or carers, to support explicit vocabulary teaching.

Actions that bring together the work of schools with support from parents are especially valuable in enabling children to overcome the word gap. Schools should aim to support parents and carers to have regular sustained conversations with their children, which encourage them to test out new language introduced in the classroom. Schools can also provide parents with resources that help to promote the benefits of independent reading. This is especially significant this year, as the majority of teachers surveyed by OUP and CfEY expressed concerns that pupils may have read less widely for pleasure during lockdown.

As part of the research, Dr Jessie Ricketts of Royal Holloway, University of London, emphasises pupils' need for exposure to high-quality spoken and written language: "The standard advice is to encourage parents to talk to their children. But they shouldn't just talk at them; they should also be encouraged to listen to their children and engage with them. Reading to them is valuable too, because in order to gain broad and nuanced knowledge of vocabulary, exposure to books is really important. Books introduce young people to quite different kinds of language in terms of the vocabulary items, the frequency of those items and the way that vocabulary items are used."

2020 has been a real challenge for education practitioners and parents alike, and amazing efforts have been made across the board to help young people to continue learning in the face of unprecedented unsettling events. I know how exhausting daily work with young people can be at the best of times, and the resilience of the sector has shone through despite constant changes this year.

The approaches OUP and CfEY are proposing in 'Bridging the Gap' aim to offer some straightforward approaches that can complement existing practice during such a busy time. By reaching out to others to understand different contexts, pool skills and share good practice we can all help young people to overcome the disruption of 2020, narrow the word gap and move forward to future success.

To access the full report, available online from Friday 23rd October, please visit the OUP website here: oxford.ly/wordgap

Alix Robertson is an Associate at The Centre for Education and Youth and will lead this project. She brings both journalism and teaching experience to team, where she has developed short films about special educational needs and disabilities for the Department for Education and Whole School SEND.

About the Centre for Education and Youth

The Centre for Education and Youth is a 'think and action-tank' that believes society should ensure all children and young people receive the support they need to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. It provides the evidence and support policy makers and practitioners need to support young people.

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7th Jun 2021

Blogs

Critical Race Theory: Why Unconscious Bias Training Isn't Enough.

Education is key to the anti-racist fight. Alas, research suggests that racism is still deeply embedded in our school systems.

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, many organisations, including schools, are looking for ways to address, or to be seen as addressing, racism. The drive to stamp out racism has seen charities, corporate firms and even the Labour Party turn to unconscious bias training. However, if unconscious bias training is treated as a panacea for tackling racism in our education system, we will fail to address the system-level causes and consequences that result in:

- **Black Caribbean students being excluded from school at a three times higher rate than white British students;**
- **Widespread racist bullying, with 61% of school staff and 32% of students under 15 witnessing such incidents;**
- **A lack of diversity in teaching staff, with white teachers accounting for 92% of teachers, and only 3% of headteachers coming from an 'ethnic minority background'.**

This article therefore uses Critical Race Theory to argue that by ignoring structural racism, unconscious bias training misses the root cause of racism and does not go far enough as a solution.

What is Critical Race Theory?

While Critical Race Theory (CRT) is not a programme, or training session, that can fit neatly into an inset day, it provides a piece of the puzzle to help us understand how far we have to go in tackling racism in education, and why unconscious bias training alone, will never be enough. Critical race theory (CRT) broadly is a way of explaining how race has been constructed and transformed into racial inequality.

The intellectual movement began in the 1970s, headed by legal scholars in the US seeking to understand why racism persisted despite the passing of civil rights legislation. CRT arrived in the UK a little later, gaining prominence within the field of educational research in the early 2000s. The most prominent thinkers in the UK are David Gilborn and Paul Warmington who both have an interest in CRT and its implications for education in the UK. Both have written extensively on the topic. Although it has roots in legal theory, it has become important in understanding how racism impacts education, specifically framing peoples understanding around academic testing, classroom dynamics, exclusions, and the lack of diversity in the curriculum.

While there is no single statement that defines CRT, there are a few basic tenets.

A core tenet of CRT posits that racism is so deeply entrenched that it is not abnormal, rather it has become the 'norm'. It emphasises that often racism does not happen in explicit forms, rather it is more nuanced and subtle, and built into our structures. It emphasises that often, racism is not explicit or easy to spot and point out, racism is not just slurs and abuse hurled in the street. Rather, racism is built into our structures and institutions, which is why we see system level disparities between BAME people and white people in many aspects of society. In the UK, the term 'institutional racism' first entered popular discourse following the 1999 Macpherson report which defined it as:

'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people'.

Unfortunately, over twenty years later institutional racism in the UK continues, this is evident in the fact that:

- ***Young BAME people are more likely to be registered on 'gang' lists by police;***
- ***Black people are still nine times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people;***
- ***People in all minority ethnic groups have a higher proportion of people living in overcrowded homes compared to white British people.***

The list goes on and on.

Unconscious bias doesn't go far enough…

Because unconscious bias training aims to tackle discrimination and prejudice by making people more aware of the impact their biases have on individual decisions and actions, it fails to help people understand or address structural racism. This is not to say that unconscious bias does not exist or that it is not an important component of understanding racism: unconscious bias is grounded in CRT, as racism is so embedded in society it also permeates our ideas thinking and influences our actions.

However, by focusing on the impact of people's individual thoughts and biases when trying to racism, the influence that structures have is ignored and frames racism as something that happens 'unconsciously' in our minds. Unconscious bias training doesn't question or address where these ideas come from nor does it frame them within the power structures that allow them to exist. In order to be impactful, real anti-racist work must acknowledge the influence that structural racism has on our ideas and material realities and it cannot frame discussions around biases and individual actions.

What should schools do?

The struggle against racism will have to be multifaceted. The pervasive nature of racism means there is no 'magic bullet' that will solve it, and those that want to embed an anti-racist agenda are in for a protracted fight. Critical race theorists suggest that schools must take several steps to tackle racism, relying on multiple sources of information and going beyond training which focuses on individuals' biases. Suggested steps schools can take include:

- **Use your data: If the data starts to highlight that certain groups are overrepresented in undesirable categories, the next step is to enact change.**
- **Increase racial literacy of school staff: Currently the majority of our teaching workforce is white, and many go into teaching feeling they are not 'racially literate'. In their report on racism in secondary schools, Runnymede argue that the racial literacy should developed on an ongoing basis. This depends on teachers being given the time and resources to begin this journey. Suggested readings can be found here.**
- **Diversify your curriculum to increase racial diversity: Our current curriculum fails to reflect the racial diversity of British society. Schools should use the curriculum to teach students about the history of structural racism and use lessons too**
- **Embed clear, anti-racist policies and think of the impact that guidelines on 'neutral' policies such as uniform and hair have on BAME students: It is important that when trying to tackle racism, schools create explicit, anti-racist policies. Additionally, schools should think about the impact that policies in seemingly 'neutral' areas such as hair have on BAME students. In recent years there have been numerous cases of Black students being excluded because their hair was not deemed to be 'appropriate' for schools. Schools should therefore think about such policies, and ensure students are not inadvertently impacted by them.**

Focusing change on policies and practice and monitoring patterns and change using data leads to more sustainable change, avoids placing the blame for structural inequality on individuals and demonstrates a schools' explicit commitment to addressing racism.

Vanessa Joshua has a BA in History, and is currently completing an MA in Global Ethics and Human Values. Previously she worked as a teaching assistant in primary and secondary schools. Her personal experience of permanent exclusion, and work with children with special educational needs and disabilities, has fuelled her passion for supporting better access to quality education for vulnerable children and young people.

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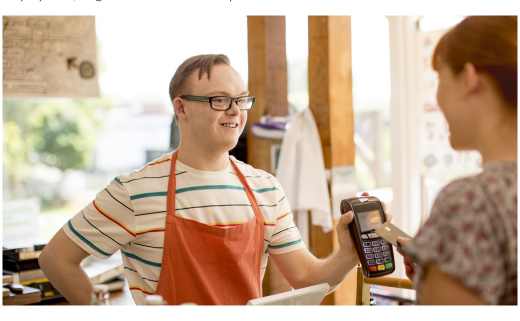
7th Jun 2021

Employment

Employment Is Not Exclusive And Is 'Everybody's Business'

Supported Internships can help SEND students make the move from education to employment, Angie Hincks from NSIP explains how.



More than 65% of learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and learners with learning difficulties, want to progress into full time employment. With the national average of SEND learners in the UK gaining sustained, paid employment being at 5.6%, how can educators help their learners achieve their goals when "exclusive" education puts such heavy emphasis on theoretical, academic programmes?

Why does inclusion for SEND learners matters so much to me personally? I also want to explore a specific model – Newham Supported Internship Programme (NSIP) and how it has a transformational impact on SEND learners' experience of education and their prospects for paid employment, within the London Borough of Newham.

My Personal Story

Growing up in Northern Ireland during the "troubles" in the 70's and 80''s, with the Army on the streets would seem quite daunting for young people today and even more so, the very apparent segregation and exclusion that was seen everywhere back then, in society. From the location you lived in, to life on the streets, to the school bus, to the schools. Remnants of this carry on to this day which has resulted in higher levels of unemployment and poverty compared to the rest of the UK.

All schools in Northern Ireland were segregated by religion. The Protestant Schools and Catholic Schools never mixed, except when on the school bus and even then, the Catholics would sit at the back of the bus and the Protestants would sit at the front. This, at times, caused a lot of mind distraction even before getting to school, as there would often be fights on the bus.

Generally, there was a very strong "left to get on with it" attitude within schools with little or no support for those that had disabilities, learning difficulties, medical conditions and those that struggled to fit in, because they thought "differently" than the mainstream academic students. With Northern Ireland's long-standing history and combination of segregation in the religious, political and social arena, growing up there as a young person, with a very troubled home life, was always a struggle and a "conflict". Schooling for me was not a place of real-life learning and allowing me to think for myself, but rather a place of being told what to think and ostracised and deemed "thick" when I didn't agree or understand.

Rebellious and disruptive

During my time in school, I was never seen as an achiever within the academic system, even though I was an outgoing and creative child with potential. Instead, I was viewed as being rebellious, disruptive and difficult. Someone with "learning difficulties" and "behavioural issues" who couldn't make sense of what I was being "told" about the world around me and having to conform to other people's opinions of what they "wanted me to know" that was restrictive and in direct conflict of my experiences. I was unable to be an individual and express what I felt deep down inside because of my troubled home life, the segregated environment and the exclusive education system I was in. I felt I had to conform to the "hive" mind, so that I could fit in and be accepted.

I wasn't academically minded, interested or able to concentrate for too long because my focus was being "directed" by others outside of myself. I was made to repeat year 7 as I failed all my exams. I was then put into the low-level form class away from the more able kids without any support, always being told I was stupid and would never amount to much by my teachers and others. As a result, I became the "clown" and made people laugh instead.

Acting the "edjit" (as we say in Ireland) developed my charisma, popularity (not with teachers!) and strengthened my character. Naturally as a result, I barely scraped through my exams at sixteen with two 'O' levels (equivalent to two GCSE's). After repeating my Maths exam four times and my English twice at a technical college, I gained four O'Levels.

Sustaining employment was a struggle in my younger years. I was fired from my first seven jobs because I didn't understand work ethics and had not been taught any real-life skills, employability skills or how to survive independently.

When I came to London at eighteen, I had to earn a living to pay rent and bills. I experienced many hard knocks, debt, getting in trouble with the law and barely surviving on the breadline. It was only then that I started to understand the importance of employment, having career aspirations, being self-sufficient and independent. So, I decided to change my attitude towards employment, money and attitude to life because my lack of confidence was holding me back.
After working in a variety of private/public jobs and being self-employed, I found myself ironically, in the Education sector, through a random agency job.

'My career began to take off'

That was when I started to find my niche and when my career, over time, took off. I supported other "troubled teenagers" like myself, into vocational studies. I then went into special education needs and disabilities (SEND). I could relate to them so much, in their feelings of not "fitting in" within the parameters of the exclusive education system. I had a good rapport with a lot of these teenagers and still have to this day. Supporting them, helping them get ready for the world of work and drawing on my many seemingly failed employment and life experiences was what in the end, rather than qualifications, became my strength in giving them hope for their future.

When I was a School Links Coordinator at West London College, I was also asked to coordinate the recruitment of Supported Internship programme in 2016. I worked on the recruitment for Project SEARCH Hilton Hotel Heathrow Terminal 5, L'Oréal/Hammersmith and Fulham Council and Kensington High Street/Kensington Town Hall Supported Internship programmes. I was part of an award-winning team at the West London Business Awards in 2019 – with 70% employment outcomes against the national average of 5.6%.

In August 2020, for the first time, I applied for a management position at Newham College and was successful. I became the Manager of Newham College's Supported Internship Programme within a very challenging borough in London. Newham is one of the poorest Boroughs in the UK with an extremely high unemployment rate and so I decided that I would take the challenge, push the boat out and really try to help change perceptions and make a difference through Inclusive education.

Even though I am not a "qualified" teacher, I now lead and manage a highly skilled college team of Tutors and Job Coaches to deliver a very different and "alternative" kind of education service for learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), learning difficulties, behavioral issues and health conditions. Along with our partners, we build on the Intern's needs and development through targets and outcomes from their Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP's). Drawing on their ambition and aspirations, we help develop their character, self-esteem, confidence, independence and engagement in the world beyond academic education into sustained paid employment.

What is a Supported Internship?

- **Supported Internships were introduced by the Government as part of preparing youths for adulthood for the best possible outcomes in Employment, Independent Living, Health and Well Being and Community Participation (Children's and Families Act 2014)**
- **One-year unpaid work-based learning programme for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), learning difficulties and health conditions, aged 16-24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)**
- **Direct and Practical Work Experience entirely at an Employer's premises in 3 Job Rotations over one year along with College Tutor and Job Coach Support**
- **Business led collaboration with key partners in Local Authorities, Local Employers, Education Providers and Supported Employment Teams focusing on a holistic approach to planning and success**
- **Flexible job matching in line with Young person's desires and assessed needs**
- **Stretch and Challenge work related skills and ethics as well as personal and social skills set, including English and Maths**
- **Ongoing Employment Support after the Supported Internship Programme is over**

Benefits

When everyone works together and contributes towards the end common goal of sustained paid employment then everyone benefits, including the intern who receives on the job training and gains independence, confidence, aspirations and sustained paid employed. This automatically improves mental health and wellbeing. It also means as an education provider that we meet Department for Education guidelines. The employer also benefits by a strengthened workforce with low risk and no cost and so together we all contribute to the regeneration of the local community.

The Newham Supported Internship Programme (NSIP)

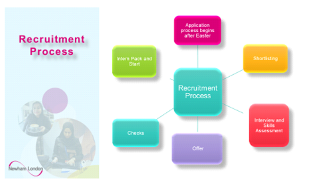
- **We are one of the Largest Providers of Supported Internships in the UK.**
- **Each year around 40 -50 interns participate on a full year programme with 5 major employers, working in the borough of Newham.**
- **To date some 150 interns have joined and completed the programme, and each year interns are successful in securing continued employment, with Project SEARCH and John Lewis outcomes at over 50%**
- **We have a dynamic partnership led by Newham College and the London Borough of Newham Supported Employment Team (Our Newham Work), and our Host Businesses, including some of the most significant employers working within the borough**
- **Our Host Businesses are Bart's NHS Trust based at Newham University Hospital – (Project SEARCH), Asda Beckton, SEND Coffee across 9 coffee shop sites, London Borough of Newham, Greater Anglia Trains, John Lewis and Waitrose**
- **Each partner brings unique skills, experiences and opportunities to the internship due to being specialists in their sectors**
- **The Partnership gives us greater potential, with resources being drawn from many places 'many hands make light work'**
- **Partnership Support with regular Planning and Strategic Meetings**
- **We are inclusive to all types of disabilities on the programme**
- **We prepare Pre-Entry level learners and support the transition into a Supported Internship 3 years before progressing on a Supported Internship.**
- **Due to Covid 19 and working remotely, we had to be creative. The Interns on one of our Internships embarked on setting up a business online. They are now in the process of opening their first online shop.**
- **We are inclusive of 25yr olds to 30yr olds without an Education Health and Care Plan which is funded by the Commissioner of Adult and Social Care**
- **We have embarked on the Duke of Edinburgh Award which is linked through the Newham Youth Participation Services to provide extra support in skills and wellbeing.**

How the NSIP works in practice

Recruitment

We work very closely with the London Borough of Newham's Supported Employment Team (Our Newham Work) and Generate Opportunities, to find the right candidates for this programme. The criteria is designed to meet applicants' wants and include:

The Recruitment Process



How we support interns on the Supported Internship Programme

- **Intern Support – Tutors provided by Newham College, Job Coaches provided by Generate Opportunities, Mentors and Buddies provided by Employers**
- **Ongoing Training from Our Newham Work with Mental Health, Keeping Safe Online, etc**
- **Ongoing Training from Generate with Employability Skills**
- **Follow on Support with Our Newham Work**
- **Employer Support with regular Steering Group Meetings**
- **Parental Support with regular contact with Tutors, Job Coaches and Parent Forums**
- **British Association of Supported Employment (BASE) Support**

Newham College

Newham College provides the education aspect of the programme, with tutor support for Maths and English and Employability Skills for one hour a day before rotations. The tutor also supports in rotations alongside job coaches. As well as providing college job coaches to support the Newham Supported Internship Program, we also provide employer liaison for all the SEND work experience related programmes at Newham College, pre NSIP.

Generate Opportunities

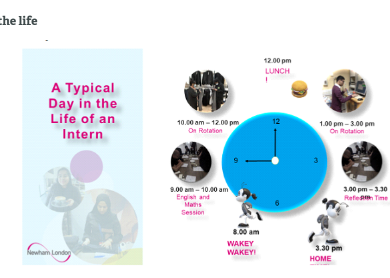
Generate is commissioned to provide us with highly skilled Job Coaches and to support in funding through Access to Work. The employers assign work" buddies" in their organisations to be mentors for the Interns and help job coaches learn the tasks before the job coaches guide the Interns through systematic training.

London Borough of Newham's Supported Employment Team – Our Newham Work

Post Internship – Support When Looking for Work:

- **Identifying ambitions, learning needs and individual skills to advise on suitable types of jobs**
- **Exploring previous experience and job preferences**
- **CV preparation – help creating/ amending a CV, completing applications etc.**
- **Support during the recruitment & selection process and assistance to improve interview techniques**
- **Employer Liaison – liaising with appropriate employers, to secure a range of vacancies**
- **Sourcing employment opportunities tailored to candidates' individual needs and preferences**
- **Coaching/motivation**
- **Support When in Work:**
- **In-Work Job Coach Support when Interns secure employment or a work placement to help them stay employed (including support to tackle problems at work)**
- **Support with work related training**
- **Support to apply for Access to Work Grant once Interns get a job, including ongoing support to ensure Interns can travel to work safely**
- **Negotiating reasonable adjustments within the workplace**
- **Understanding in-work benefits and tax credits**

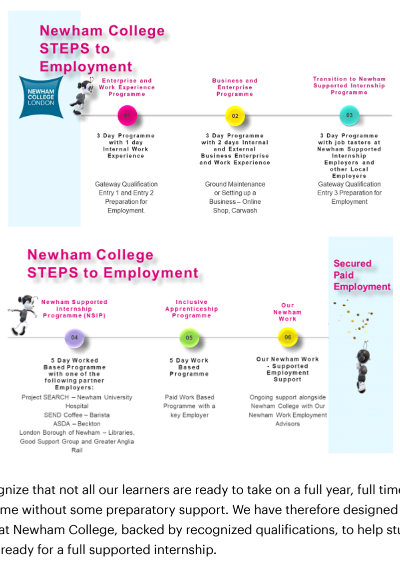
A day in the life



Measuring success

Measuring success is one of our key performance indicators and helps us towards our end goal of employment outcomes for the young person with SEND and Learning difficulties

STEPS to employment



We recognize that not all our learners are ready to take on a full year, full time programme without some preparatory support. We have therefore designed a suite of support at Newham College, backed by recognized qualifications, to help students become ready for a full supported internship.

Progression

Progression after the Supported Internship is complete, is either job searching with Our Newham Work, the Kickstart Programme (6 months paid employment) or onto an Inclusive Apprenticeship where they will "earn as they learn"

Challenges

During Covid 19 lockdown, working remotely has had its challenges for Interns, tutors and job coaches, especially in regard to Interns engagement and their mental health. Two things that have been a great success for us and the Interns during lockdown was the setting up of the Duke of Edinburgh Award which we have started as a pilot scheme. The Interns will complete the bronze award where they attach their employability skills and physical activity, including walking and travel training.

As already mentioned, our other measure of success has been setting up an online shop; the Interns on the London Borough of Newham Programme are in the process of doing this. This is helping them develop website skills, marketing skills and learning how to set up a business of their own online.

Further Future Goals

Future Employment improvements I would like to see include considering the interview process – young people with SEND as well as those without, can find this a daunting experience especially the need to "perform" and "tick boxes" in the half hour interview. If employers started looking into alternative methods like work trials, based on the practicality of Supported Internship Programmes, they could gain a strengthened workforce and increase staff retention.
I would also like to see "tech" companies, that are currently expanding, give employment opportunities to young people with SEND. Some young people, especially with Autism are whiz kids in the tech world. The future seems to be moving this way, so tech companies would absolutely benefit in employing young people with alternative thinking processes.

Conclusion

Life is all about challenges, but also about overcoming them, as I know myself! inclusive education is about thinking outside of the box and beyond, in the Supported Internship Programmes. These can be "life changing and are a fantastic opportunity to bridge the gap from an inclusive education system through to employment and independence. I am very proud to be part of the Newham College and London Borough of Newham partnership team to deliver a relevant, progressive programme to support young people succeed in their lives.

Angie Hincks manages the Newham Supported Internship Programme (NSIP) at Newham College of Further Education.

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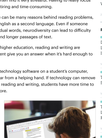
Author
Mary Wilson

Comprehension and Digital Literacy

Having Difficulty With Reading and Writing Shouldn't Be A Barrier To Learning

Ten percent of the population are believed to be dyslexic, but it is still often poorly understood. With the right support, the strengths and talents of dyslexic people can really shine.



Reading and writing are necessities in everyday life. Most of us spend a considerable part of the day deciphering text – checking social media, glancing at news headlines, using train timetables, looking for road signs, sending WhatsApp messages, and much more.

So just imagine how hard it would be if you couldn't process information as you were reading it, if the words got in the way of the message. That can be exactly what it's like for someone with dyslexia and they often find it very stressful. Having to really focus on all that text can also be incredibly tiring and time-consuming.

It's not just dyslexia, of course – there can be many reasons behind reading problems, including poor vision and speaking English as a second language. Even if someone doesn't have problems reading individual words, they could still have trouble with difficulty comprehending lists of instructions and longer passages of text.

For students, whether at school or in higher education, reading and writing are incredibly important. How can a student give you an answer when it's hard enough to read the question?

The good news is that, with assistive technology software on a student's computer, tablet, or smartphone, they're never far from a helping hand. If technology can remove some of the difficulty and stress from reading and writing, students have more time to learn – and will enjoy learning a lot more.

Claro Software has a range of tools to help you read and write – from "simple" reading text aloud, to advanced word prediction and a dyslexic-friendly spelling checker. Clarofloved, our flagship assistive technology suite, is available on Windows, Mac, and Chromebook, while Claro's mobile apps can help students while they're away from their computers.

In this article, we'll learn about the types of assistive technology software that can help students who have difficulty with reading and writing. We'll then look at how Clarofloved can help to break down these barriers.

Breaking down reading barriers

> Before using Clarofloved I would spend hours re-reading the same passage in order for me to understand it. Whilst in university, reading from a scanned document that the tutor had set was also very difficult to read. Since using Clarofloved I have found it much quicker for information to sink in.
>
> – Hayley (Clarofloved user)

If reading something is difficult, one option is to get someone else to read it for you. That's great when you're studying with a friend, for example, but it's often not a practical solution. What about when you're working on your own? Or in the classroom? Or even sitting an exam?

Thankfully, there is now a huge range of assistive technology to help students with their reading. This includes screen readers, OCR, screen tinting and masking, and screen magnifiers.

What can teachers do?

While this article focuses on assistive technology for students, there are many things that teachers or lecturers can do to make reading easier. Simple change might be supplying handouts in Word format rather than PDF, as students can set their own fonts and spacing to make them easier to read.

Other considerations include making sure that students with poor vision are seated where they can see the board. Making instructions short and clear. Using a multi-sensory approach where possible. Even switching slide backgrounds from white to cream or pale blue can help.

There is a lot of information out there from organisations such as the British Dyslexia Association. Even small changes can make big differences.

Screen readers (text-to-speech)

Screen readers read out text from your screen. They integrate with your usual applications, such as Word and Outlook, to read out whatever text you want. Most screen readers can read out PDFs, which are widely used for handouts, lecture notes, and so on.

A huge benefit of electronic screen readers (as opposed to human readers) is that students always have access to them. They can also be used with headphones or an earpiece – great to avoid disturbing people, or just to be discreet. Electronic screen readers will read out whatever you want, as many times as you want – they will never get impatient or frustrated.

Having text read aloud lets students focus on meaning rather than stumbling over individual words and letters. Just knowing that you've always got a reader with you can remove a lot of the stress from reading – eventually, it builds confidence and independence.

Full-featured screen readers like Clarofloved do a lot more than simply reading out text. Clarofloved can highlight text as it is read out, for example, or record an entire document to audio so you can listen to it later.

Optical character recognition (OCR)

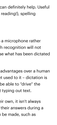
Not all text is text! Sometimes, text is inaccessible – for example, documents that have been scanned to PDF using a basic scanner, or a slide deck that has been exported as images. To a computer, these are pictures of text, rather than text itself, and basic screen readers will not be able to read them.

To read inaccessible text, it needs to be processed into accessible text using OCR. Screen readers may be able to do this automatically, or as a separate action.

Screen tinting and masking

Students with dyslexia or Irlen Syndrome can benefit from tinting their screen. While they can use a physical filter or tinted glasses, it's much easier to use software. Software screen tinting has the bonus of being more configurable and much less obvious to others – breaking down the barrier associated with wearing blue glasses, for example.

Students who suffer from ADHD or visual stress may benefit from screen masking, where the screen is darkened apart from the area they are reading. This helps them to keep their place and removes visual distractions so they can focus on what they're reading.



Screen magnifiers

If a student has difficulty reading due to moderate vision loss, a magnifier can help. Whereas previously they would need a clunky physical magnifier, nowadays there is a range of software to magnify what's on their screen – as well as simply configuring their operating system to use larger text, or increasing the default zoom level on their browser.

There are also mobile apps that act as magnifiers – a student can point their smartphone's camera at a textbook or exam paper, for example, and see it magnified on their screen.

Breaking down writing barriers

[Clarofloved] allows me to hear what I write and reads documents so I can absorb them quicker, for my dyslexic mind it is a great tool but as a poet and writer it is invaluable.

– Mark (Clarofloved user)

Reading may be hard, but writing can be even harder. Which word do I use? Have I spelled it correctly? Should I put a comma somewhere? Where do I even start?!

Unfortunately, written work is as necessary as it is stressful.

One solution is to use a scribe. Unfortunately, this is expensive and impractical – your scribe won't be there to help you finish that essay at 10pm! Scribes are sometimes used only in exams, which is a problem for students who aren't used to working that way.

While assistive technology won't write your essays for you, it can definitely help. Useful tools include speech recognition, screen readers (not just for reading!), spelling checkers, autocorrect tools, and word prediction.

Speech recognition (speech-to-text)

Speech recognition software enables students to dictate into a microphone rather than typing using a keyboard (or dictating to a scribe). Speech recognition will make typos or other spelling mistakes, but it may mainscpoke what has been dictated – text still needs to be checked carefully.

Like electronic screen readers, speech recognition has some advantages over a human scribe. It is always available, and students will have time to get used to it – dictation is a skill in its own right. Speech recognition software may also be able to "train" the computer – spelling and using applications in addition to just typing out text.

While speech recognition is great for students working on their own, it isn't always practical in a classroom environment. A student can't dictate their answers during a class test, for example! However, reasonable adjustments can be made, such as allowing that student to sit the test in a separate room.

Screen readers for writing

Text-to-speech isn't just for reading – it can be used to proofread your writing too. Having words, sentences, or paragraphs read out can really help to make sure that you have used the right words, spellings, and punctuation.

For example, words like bough, bought, and brought look similar but sound very different – a student can tell immediately when the wrong word is read out.

Spelling checkers and autocorrect

Anyone who has used a modern word processor is familiar with spelling and grammar checkers. Assistive technology includes advanced spelling checkers that identify homophones, suggest synonyms, and so on.

Autocorrect tools correct mistakes as you type – often before you realise that you've made a mistake. They can be configurable and learn from your mistakes. Writing is much quicker if you don't have to go back and make corrections.

Add on spelling checkers and autocorrect tools may be more configurable or more difficulty-focused than the tools available in Word and Outlook, for example. Students can also use them in applications that do not have their own checking tools.

Word prediction

Most people are used to word prediction on their smartphones or tablets. Similar functionality can also be useful on a laptop or desktop computer, especially for students with difficulty spelling or typing – if they have fine motor control issues, for example.

Using standard functionality

Before jumping in to Clarofloved (or other assistive technology software), a good first step is to make the most of what you already have. Nowadays, there's a whole range of accessibility settings and tools built into Windows computers, Macs, Chromebooks, smartphones and tablets.

If a student has a Windows laptop, for example, they should look through its Ease of Access settings – they can easily make all on-screen text bigger, for example, or use a more visible mouse pointer. Windows even includes some basic assistive technology tools.

Magnifier – press **Windows key** + [+] to turn on. **Windows key** + **Esc** to turn off.

Narrator – press **Windows key** + **Ctrl** + **Enter** to turn on or off.

Dictation – with the cursor in a text field, press **Windows key** + **H** to start or stop.

These tools may be enough for occasional use, where basic functions are enough. Frequent users, however, will benefit from the additional features and configurability that come with specialised software like Clarofloved.

How Clarofloved can help

I love Clarofloved and have used it for a long time. Basically, this one product has changed my life, it's made everything possible. From a position where information was not accessible, suddenly a world of information became available.

– Phil (Clarofloved user)

Clarofloved is a simple toolbar that works on Windows, Mac, or Chromebook to provide support for reading and writing in any application.

Behind the toolbar is a lot of functionality to help users read and write. Clarofloved can:

- **Read particularly any text from your screen, using a range of high quality voices. Male or female, with a range of languages and accents.**
- **Scan documents from paper, PDF, or screen, using OCR to make text accessible.**
- **Check spelling, including phonetic misspellings and homophones, with a spelling dictionary to help you choose the correct word.**
- **Adjust font size, type, and spacing in Microsoft Word.**
- **Add word prediction to any application, including phonetic prediction.**
- **Save text as audio or video file so you can listen to it later.**

Clarofloved includes many additional tools, such as:

- **Claro Video and Claro Screenshot – for screen tinting and masking.**
- **Claro Audiobooks – for recording and reviewing lectures and audio notes.**
- **ClaroCapture – study skills tool that helps you gather information from many sources.**
- **ClaroVoice – voice mapping and macros that helps you organise your thoughts. This can help with research, planning, outlining, and so on.**

Clarofloved users also have access to Claro Software's mobile apps, helping them to read and write on their iPhones, iPads, and Android devices.

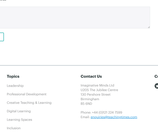
Many users have found that Clarofloved makes them more comfortable with reading and writing. They are in control and can become more independent. Eventually, their difficulties stop being a barrier and they can actually enjoy learning.

Clarofloved examples

Below are just a few of the ways that Clarofloved can help students with reading and writing:

Reading Word or PDF handouts

If a teacher or lecturer issues handouts, notes or assignments in Word or PDF format, students can simply open them in Word or Acrobat Reader and click Clarofloved's Play button to read them out. Clarofloved's word-by-word highlighting helps students to focus on each word as it is read out, minimising visual distractions.



With Clarofloved, students can read at the same speed as everyone else in the classroom.

Annotating PDF handouts

Students can use ClaroPDF (a cross-platform PDF reader included with Clarofloved) to add highlighting and simple annotations to their PDFs. Great for working with PDF handouts, where it can also be used to write and submit answers without switching between multiple applications.

Making sure text is written correctly

Clarofloved's advanced spelling checker and word prediction help students to write essays without typos or other spelling mistakes. The spelling checker will identify all homophones in case the wrong one has been used. It can also make writing richer by supplying synonyms and dictionary definitions, all of which can be read aloud.

Reading text using mobile devices

Claro's mobile apps can read out text wherever you are. With Claro ScanPen, for example, student can use a smartphone or tablet to take a photo of any text, then highlight it with their finger and have it read out. It even works offline, so can be used in exams.

Helping with exams

Tests and exams are huge barriers to students with difficulties reading and writing. From understanding the questions to writing down answers, exams are extremely stressful.

Clarofloved (or Clarofloved SE, which doesn't include any writing aids), ClaroPDF, and Claro ScanPen can all be used in exams.

As students can use these tools with headphones, they can sit exams in the same room as their peers, rather than having to be in a separate room with a human reader.

Formerly a primary school teacher for 18 years, Mary Wilson is a Product Evangelist at Claro Software.

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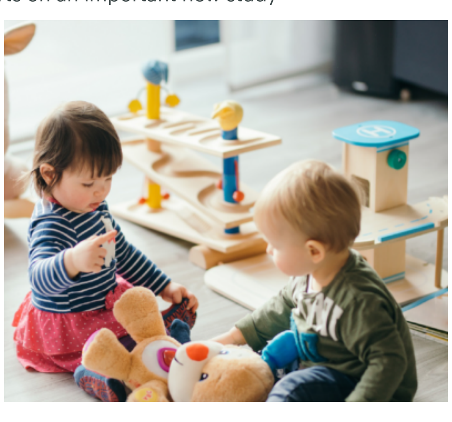
Author
Sal McKeown
8th Jun 2021

Child Assessment

Identifying Special Educational Needs In The Early Years

How do we know whether normal individual variation and differing speeds of maturation are masking a special need? Sal McKeown reports on an important new study



Research shows educational gaps between children with SEND and children without SEND are already very wide by the time children start school. Too often less obvious needs go unrecognised in early years,

A study by **nasen**, the special needs charity, (Identifying Special Educational Needs In The Early Years) suggest however that if staff are trained and know what signs to look for, then they could identify potential issues and put suitable support in place at an earlier age.

The aims of the research were to explore:

- **The process of identifying SEN in early years settings, with a specific focus on the SENCO role and their working relationships with children, parents, staff and other relevant individuals**
- **From the SENCOs' perspective, the key issues regarding the identification of SEN within their early years settings, including how they understand the difference between what may be considered 'typical development' and a possible special educational need**
- **The key enablers and barriers in relation to identifying SEN, as perceived by the SENCO in their settings**
- **The support and resources SENCOs are able to access during the process of identifying whether a child may have an additional need**
- **The research was undertaken between November 2019 – March 2020**

Evidence from Phase One

The first phase was an online survey open to early years was shared through local authority networks, social media and SEN and networks and completed November – December 2019. 216 people responded to the online survey, with 214 giving their consent for their data to be reported within this document. Of the 214 respondents who consented to their data being reported, 202 stated that they worked as a SENCO in an early years' setting.

Size of setting	% of respondents	Number of respondents
n/a I am a childminder	3%	n=7
Less than 35 places	34%	n=69
36-65 places	28%	n=57
More than 66 places	34%	n=69

Identifying SEN

When asked about the primary source of evidence a SENCO could refer to when considering whether a child has additional needs, 67% of SENCOs stated observations by staff, with 90% of SENCOs stating that this evidence was either extremely useful or very useful. Only 1% of SENCOs stated that the views of the parents were the primary source of evidence.

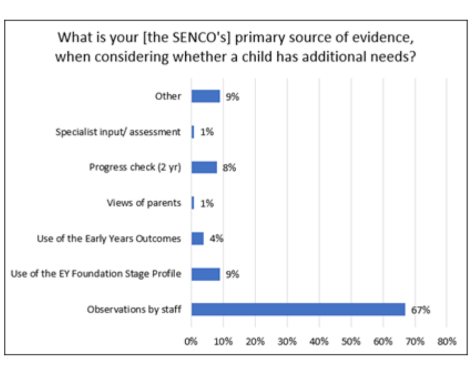


Table 1

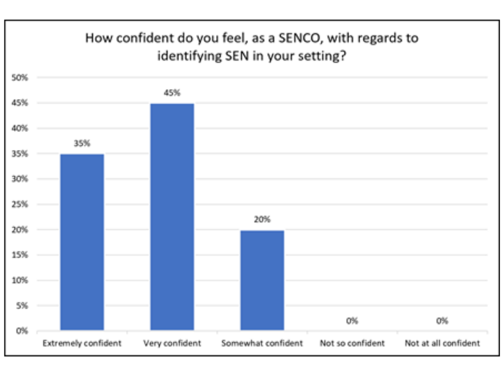
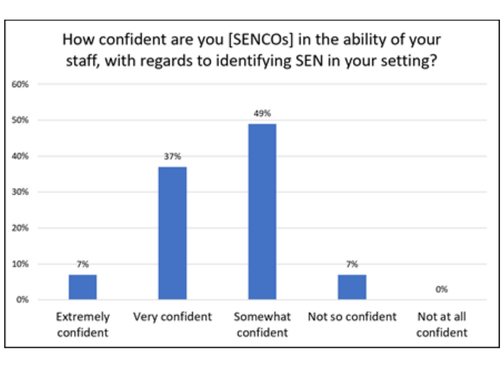
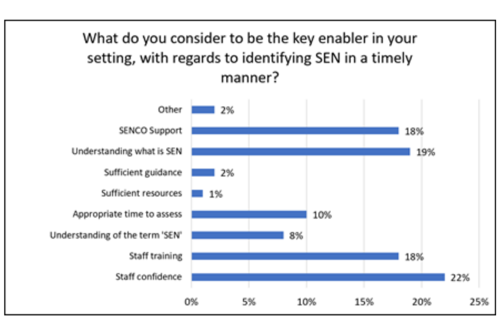


Table 2

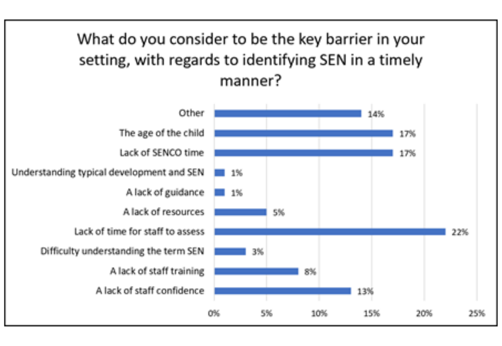
In addition to experience, a number of SENCOs reported on the importance of training. 58% of all SENCOs (stated that they had received training specifically in relation to identifying SEN in the early years.



Again experience, or lack of, permeated the responses with concerns voiced that less experienced members of staff had not received training in this area. SENCOs felt that their relationship with staff was important, noting the importance of staff being able to approach them with concerns, as well as their role in providing ongoing training and support for staff:



SENCOs reported on the importance of having robust systems, which staff engaged with, as a factor which enables the timely identification of SEN in their settings. Within this, regular meetings, formal or otherwise, were cited as key.



However, 3 of the 7 childminders highlighted a lack of resources as their biggest barrier for identifying SEN in their settings.

'There are not the facilities to refer to! Early intervention is all well and good… but the teams such as SALT and HV etc are so stretched that unless the need is extreme then you have NO CHANCE of a referral… children with mild to moderate difficulties are overlooked… the ATS in my area emailed in September to say they have no more capacity for any referrals… it's disgraceful.'

Evidence from Phase 2

Between January 2020 and March 2020 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with early years SENCOs and local authority early years Area SENCOs (or equivalent). Sixteen early years SENCOs and three early years Area SENCOs took part. The SENCOs were from varying settings, including pre-schools (6), nurseries (6) and maintained nursery schools (3). One participant was a childminder. under four over-arching themes:

Many agreed that identifying needs should be a holistic process involving discussions with the parents starting with the child's birth: 'You investigate everything. You're putting the child in the middle and you're investigating their worlds, so it's not just… it's about their family, their relatives, who they've got, who they interact with, where they live, their environment, what friends they have, what their parents lives are like, what their parents jobs are like, how that impacts on the parents and how it impacts on the family.'

Five of the sixteen participants referred to having a 'gut feeling' about a child, which would often prompt the process while others spoke of work in the setting collecting data on a regular basis to see whether progress was being made, and in what areas, but also to consider whether the gap between the individual and their peers was widening. Some felt it was important to give a child time and space to develop, particularly when they were adjusting to a new setting. One nursery SENCO described this process as 'watchful waiting';

The role of families

Home visits were cited as an important factor when developing a holistic picture of the child. Some use welcome packs, introductory stay and play sessions and evening parent sessions instead.

Often early years' settings were a parents' first experience of an educational setting for their child, and therefore this meant that it could take time to develop trusting relationships. All felt it was vital to develop a relationship with the parents, before broaching any concerns regarding their child's development. In early years staff often raised concerns related to speech and language and/ or social communication, with one SENCO noting that it was more challenging for parents to hear that their child is experiencing difficulties in these areas, as opposed to cognition and learning which may be raised in a primary setting.

Uniqueness of early years

Early years SENCOs could be working with three and four year olds, or from birth to five years. There are many different attendance patterns so a child may be at nursery part time or attend multiple settings.

SENCOs pointed out that this could create a delay in identifying SEN within the setting and/ or a delay in accessing support from multi-agencies: 'But you've only had them for a year and by the time you [have] waited to let them settle in… then you have your concerns, then you need a couple of reviews to say, actually what we're putting in place isn't working, time has gone and they are moving on [to school].'

On the other hand, they felt that early years settings were flexible and met children's needs without further interventions. Some felt that some children's needs became more apparent in a more formal school setting, where there were different expectations, different staffing levels and potentially less flexibility with provision.

Some SENCOs experienced 'professional frustration' where they felt their in-depth knowledge of the child and family, and evidenced views were not often given sufficient 'weight' in comparison to the view of a multi-agency professional

Working with multi-agency professionals

This varied and finance was a constraint. 'We also have really good links with [the] speech and language therapist. They are great. They come and see the children in the setting and then work with practitioners supporting them on strategies and things,' said one but another cited 'long waiting lists and access to support 'did not appear joined up', with another SENCO remarking that due to the waiting times a child could be 'well on their way to school' before an assessment is made and before they get any additional support.'

Some had regular visits and were supported through assessments and observations; others took part in multi-agency meetings where decisions were taken for immediate implementation. Some SENCOs cited a tension between the moral obligation to provide the correct support for a child whilst settings were under financial pressure.

Recommendations

- **There should be more targeted guidance relevant to the different early years' settings**
- **There should be fair representation of all early years' settings in local and national policy reviews to ensure that issues, and good practice, can be identified and taken into account for all future policy making decisions**
- **There should be guidance on the time allocated to the early years SENCO role in different settings**
- **There should be a job description, specific for the early years SENCO role**
- **There should be more work undertaken to develop understanding of the early years SENCO role across the education, health and care sectors**
- **The sector needs to share good practice developed by early years SENCOs, particularly in relation to developing family relationships**
- **The sector needs to share good practice demonstrated by early years SENCOs, in relation to developing inclusive environments**
- **Agencies should share information from the progress check at aged two between the child's providers as standard practice**

The report has come at a time when many nurseries are struggling.

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, a quarter of the nation's nurseries were running at a deficit during lockdown: 'The pandemic has hit demand for childcare hard: during the lockdown, when only vulnerable children and those with key worker parents were able to access childcare, fewer than 250,000 children 0 to 4 were attending childcare on a given day, compared to around 1.4 million before the pandemic. Since June, the sector has been allowed to serve all children in England, but even before the summer holidays, take-up peaked at 420,000 children.'

A Nursery Workforce Survey and Report | 2019 (ndna.org.uk) showed that even then private and voluntary nursery employers are struggling to recruit Level 3 staff nurseries were struggling to recruit Level 3 staff, the backbone of the service

Those that survive will need to provide an even more inclusive service than before and there is evidence aplenty in this useful report to set them on the right track.

Identifying Special Educational Needs In The Early Years, **nasen**, 2020

Challenges for the childcare market: the implications of COVID-19 for childcare providers in England -Jo **Blanden**, **Claire Crawford**, **Elaine Drayton**, **Christine Farquharson**, **Megan Jarvie** and **Gillian Paull**

NDNA Workforce Survey for England 2019 results

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Author
Alistair Crawford
7th Jun 2021

Inclusion

Inclusion, Aspiration & The Power of Sport

Sport can empower children with disabilities in a way that nothing else can. Alistair Crawford, from St Martins School, Derby, describes his experience and how to get support in your school or club

> "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where there was only despair".
> Nelson Mandela

The above quote from Nelson Mandela beautifully articulates the amazing power sport has. From making lifelong friends on the rugby pitch, learning how to win and lose gracefully through to developing leadership skills and living a healthy lifestyle, sport has in many ways shaped the person I am today.

Many of my best memories have been playing or watching sport and it would be almost impossible to quantify the positive impact of sport on my health and wellbeing. Having worked in Specialist education for over a decade I'm more than familiar with the many barriers and disadvantage our students face, although this is perhaps none more evident than in the sporting arena.

In 'A Fair, Supportive Society' (2018) The Institute of Health Equity share some quite shocking statistics regarding long term outcomes for people with learning disabilities. The report highlights significant disadvantage in the areas of employment (7 times less likely to be in paid employment), increased vulnerability around Criminal activity (3 times more likely to end up in prison and alarming figures around long-term health outcomes (likely to die 15 – 20 years younger).

Perhaps most upsetting is the statistic that 50"% of learning-disabled people suffer from chronic loneliness. This harrowing report lays bare the disadvantage facing our young people with SEND and makes clear the need for us as professionals and indeed wider society to very much 'flip the narrative'. I firmly believe that sport, exercise and leading a healthy, active lifestyle have a huge role to play here.

Sport England and Activity Alliance have reported that despite 4 out of every 5 disabled stating that they would like to be more active, they are twice as likely to be inactive, with 70% believing that sport is not for somebody like them. This raises the serious questions as to why this is the case? What the barriers are and most importantly how can we overcome them. Posing these questions to a number of SEND learners (KS2 to post 19 in both Specialist & Mainstream settings) and their families the answers brought out consistent themes around lack of opportunities, past negative experiences and very much a mixed picture with regards to accessibility and inclusive practice.

An Inclusive Physical Education curriculum should both engage and inspire young people to lead healthy and active lifestyles and broaden their experience of sport and fitness activities. Physical Education and sport should be accessible regardless of a young person's disability or needs. Basing a curriculum and activities around a broad variety of sports helps provide new, exciting experiences that will spark an interest and motivate students to be more physically active and enjoy the associated health and social benefits this can bring.

A fantastic tool and starting point for any teacher or coach would be the C-STEP principle. Thinking how we communicate, considering the space, task, equipment and how people help us ensure accessibility and inclusion are at the heart of our practice. C-STEP prompts us to 'Think SEND' at every stage from planning, our environment, delivery and assessment and helps us build a strong universal offer in which all students can thrive and flourish regardless of their needs.

Communication

Use the students preferred communication methods be that verbal, Makaton, symbols or a combination of them all to ensure that lessons and activities are accessible. When teaching new skills in PE it is easy to be quite 'wordy' and technical in our delivery so using just key words / signs / symbols simple language in our instructions can be a huge support to students with poor receptive language and processing delays.

Space

Carefully consider the environment to ensure all students are able to access PE lessons and sporting activities. By making adaptations to the physical environment and space we can make all PE lessons inclusive for wheelchair users and students with a range of physical needs.

Increasing the space and ensuring there is room for wheelchairs to easily manoeuvre can help make a PE lesson fully inclusive and accessible for all students

Task

Changes and adaptations can be made to activities and specific tasks to ensure all students are able to participate fully. Adaptations can range from small, subtle changes when performing a skill through to larger modifications to the activity or sport itself.

Adapting a volleyball lesson by playing a match of seated volleyball is a great way to practice key skills and make the activity accessible to all students

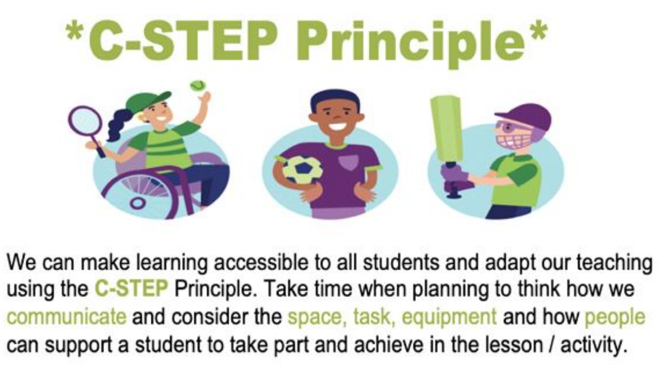
Equipment

The equipment we use can make a big difference as to whether a lesson is inclusive and accessible or not. By making modifications to and sometimes changing the equipment we use we can ensure that all students are able to participate, enjoy and experience success in our lessons.

- **Using balloons with rice in to support Visually Impaired learners in a tennis session.**
- **Large, bright, shiny, tactile resources to engage more sensory learners e.g. a ball wrapped in tin foil / bubble wrap".**
- **Making adaptations to the size, weight and grip of PE equipment can have a positive impact on learners with a range of physical needs".**
- **Using assistive resources to support students in target sports e.g. ramps to play Boccia, cricket and Ten pin bowling**

People

The support students receive from key people throughout a PE lesson can make arguably the biggest impact on their skills, attitudes and progress. A key adult can model skills, break down activities into smaller steps and also support with the repetition and overlearning of skills that can be so important for SEND learners. Peers can be a huge support in helping to motivate and model skills whilst ensuring a student maintains their independence and doesn't become over reliant on the support of a key adult. Students working in mixed ability groups can provide aspirational role models and opportunities for the most able to develop their skills further through demonstrating and coaching.



In 2019, St Martins School had a cohort of particularly talented athletes who experienced success on a local, regional and national level with several students winning medals and setting records. The very proud staff team were surprised to learn that despite the obvious ability and enthusiasm the students did not participate in any sport or training outside of our school environment.

Buoyed by their success our students were ready to take on the next challenge with ideas of longer distances (even marathons at one point!) and staging an event. As the conversations developed one thing became very clear…..'our students hated being treated differently and competing in 'special events'…..all they wanted was to be the same as everybody else and take part as equals.

All aspects of the SHOUTaboutSEND 5K from its conception through to delivery was led by students. Students developed their employability skills designing the logo, marketing the event, making merchandise and taking care of the race logistics. The 5k attracted over 250 participants of mixed ability and all ages (club runners who had never encountered specialist education lined up against students using race runners).

At the heart of the event was a sports village in which we invited sports clubs from across the city to come and showcase their sport and to engage with our learners and families (clubs were very open about their desire to be more inclusive but shared a nervousness around their lack of expertise and that they might get something wrong or cause offence). The SHOUTaboutSEND 5K was a huge success with many athletes stating it was the 'best atmosphere' and 'most fun' they have had at a sporting event.

A growing number of organisations are leading fantastic work to make sport accessible and inclusive. As professionals an awareness of opportunities for students outside of school is a key part of our role in supporting them to lead active, healthy lifestyles and have high aspirations of what they might achieve in sport. Our ability to signpost organisations such as IMAS, Activity Alliance and Special Olympics Great Britain can be life changing for both our students and families.

Inclusive Sports organisations and inspiring role models

'You have to see it to be it' (Billie-Jean King)

Visibility and media coverage is an ongoing challenge for inclusive sport; however we are starting to see small steps in the right direction. Bold Marketing for the Paralympics have captured the public's imagination and challenged perceptions around disability sport 'Meet the Superhumans' (C4) and ongoing campaigns such as Activity Alliance 'Who Says' tackle negative stereotypes head on.

Inspiring sportspeople such as Ella Beaumont (Wheelpower), Libby Clegg MBE (Paralympian) and Jonny Peacock MBE are great role models and incredibly motivating for our students. The popularity of the recent Netflix documentary 'Rising Phoenix' is another excellent example of a growing momentum for disability sport and a very well-deserved spotlight being shone on some incredible athletes.

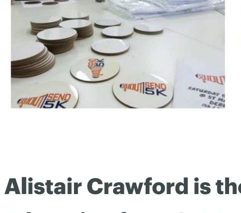
'Don't dare pity me' (BeBe Vio – Paralympian)

Conclusion

Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on disabled people and exacerbated many of the existing barriers and disadvantages faced by our students to lead active lifestyles and engage with exercise and fitness activities. It is important to highlight the silver linings of the past 12 months. Organisations such as Oak National Academy have championed inclusive sport through their online Physical Development lessons and resources and before Christmas staged a mixed ability event that saw over 6500 students from specialist and mainstream schools participate in a week-long challenge to 'Stay active & Stay Connected'.

Students in many cases have engaged incredibly well with online learning and remote education and the creation of accessible, inclusive online fitness and sport content offer a great opportunity for us to support students to lead active, healthy lifestyles.

The national focus on health and wellbeing has perhaps never been as sharp as it has been across the pandemic. As schools welcome back increasing numbers of students, physical and mental health must be top priorities as we build towards reconnection and recovery.



As professionals we must seize the opportunity through inspiring, inclusive practice to ensure all students are well placed to enjoy the many benefits of leading an active, healthy lifestyle and fully experience the power of sport!

Alistair Crawford is the Teaching School Strategic Lead and Specialist Leader of Education from St Martins School Derby

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Author
Lawrence Crilly
7th Nov 2020

Cognition and Intelligence

Our Journey Beyond Age-Related Expectations and into Thinking, Resilience And Empathy

The children at Rimrose Hope School in Sefton were, despite its disadvantaged community, performing well above their expected levels. But something was missing in their core abilities to learn and reflect. Lawrence Crilly reports on how the staff responded

In 2016, a colleague, working as a literacy consultant for a neighbouring borough, was conducting a training session for a group of Year 7 and 8 teachers from a number of high schools in the area. She shared several pieces of writing across a range of genres with the group and asked them their opinion.

The Year 7 teachers were pleased with the standard of the writing and agreed that if children entered year 7 with those skills, then they could in the words of one delegate, "Do something with them." The consultant then let secondary colleagues know that the writing samples were Age Related Expectations for Year 2 and the authors were a mere 7 years old.

How had we arrived at a place where the standards of writing now expected for children at Year 2 in a very disadvantaged school would have satisfied a secondary school colleague if displayed by an eleven year-old on entry?

Undermined our core moral purpose

I have always been a pragmatist when it comes to what works for our children. This pragmatism has worked up to a point, unfortunately for me, that point was reached with the establishment of the Age-Related Expectations (ARE) in the New National Curriculum 2014. I believe this set of expectations created a pedagogical response from my school that seriously undermined our core moral purpose and we needed to respond to it through our curriculum in a way that ensured our children had the skills they needed to succeed in life beyond school.

In 2016, following on from my colleague's secondary school encounter, I began a conversation with a number of children and their teachers in my year 2 cohort. The children were all working at ARE in reading, writing and maths and by all national measures, they were a success. They were proof that all children could reach the standards established in the 2014 curriculum regardless of their disadvantage, but at what cost?

We were concerned about the children' attitudes to school, their behaviour and their ongoing motivation and commitment to their learning.

As a staff we began to explore:

- **What formal changes to school timetables had been made as a result of the pressure from testing and the 'raising of standards' in our school?**
- **What was the impact of high stakes testing and higher expectations on our pedagogy and our curriculum?**
- **What changes had occurred informally in our routines and what was the impact on our children's experience?**
- **What were the likely implications for the children, staff and the community in the present or the future?**
- **What impact had the standards and testing agenda had on the well-being of our children, teachers and parents working and living our community?**

In answer to the question, how well do we know the children outside of their academic schoolwork? the teachers acknowledged that they knew only a limited amount of what motivated, interested or affected the children beyond the structured curriculum or their relationships in school.

"No I haven't got the time...I know they're not all the same, but I haven't got the time to sit with them in that way...they're probably really important things."

The teachers gave support and encouragement to the children in a number of ways; they constantly praised and expressed belief in their abilities to improve; they supported them academically; they attempted to offer a broad and balanced curriculum and attempted to instil some important learning behaviours all within a nurturing and caring environment. However, they also acknowledged that they found it difficult to do enough to future proof the children:

"I think we give them a lot of support,, I think we really get to know them and when they leave us it falls apart very quickly and I think..." Do we do enough work on resilience? Do they have the life skills when they leave? They have the academic skills but do they have the life skills and social skills?" I'm not convinced some of them do and maybe we should address it...sometimes they fail because they need much positivity and coaching and mentoring and "Come on, come on, you can do it!" and it becomes impossible..."

A picture emerged of the amount of nurturing our children needed to be successful being beyond the emotional and practical domain of the teachers. In the system as it was, the teachers felt that they could deliver academic success, but acknowledged it may come at the price of resilience.

On the surface, the group of children talked keenly about school: how there was nothing they negative about their days, "I like everything," and how they were up for the tasks that their teachers gave them "I like hard challenges." They appeared to enjoy all aspects of the curriculum and mention sport, art and music and even working hard to improve their grammar as aspects of school life that make them happy.

On the surface

Looking elsewhere, however, they talked of becoming distracted easily, of not completing homework tasks, of not reading at home with an adult and of struggling to get tasks done. The teachers identified the language issues that arose as an impact of poor home support:

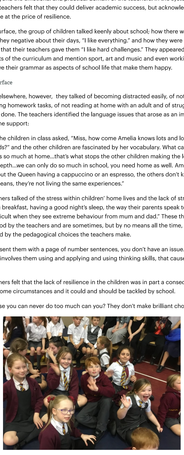
"One of the children in class asked, "Miss, how come Amelia knows lots and lots of new words?" and the other children are fascinated by her vocabulary. What can I say? She reads so much at home...that's what stops the other children making the leap into greater depth...we can only do so much in school, you need home as well. Amelia can write about the Queen having a cappuccino or an espresso, the others don't know what it means, they're not living the same experiences."

The teachers talked of the stress within children' home lives and the lack of structure "...having breakfast, having a good night's sleep, the way their parents speak to them; that's difficult when they see extreme behaviour from mum and dad." These things are understood by the teachers and are sentiments, but by no means all the time, countered by the pedagogical choices the teachers make.

"...If I present them with a page of number sentences, you don't have an issue...if it's a task that involves them using and applying and using thinking skills, that causes friction."

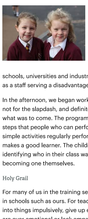
The teachers felt that the lack of resilience in the children was in part a consequence of their home circumstances and it could and should be tackled by school.

"...because you can never do too much can you? They don't make brilliant choices."



It was interesting that by having the conversation with staff and children about the issues we were dealing with every day, we were much more determined to address them in a positive way. This would mean taking a systematic approach to the teaching of the soft skills of empathy, friendship, communication, responsibility, planning, assertiveness and emotional control.

We began to look for ways in which we could develop the soft skills that would help our children become more collaborative and empathetic. Our research led us to the work of Reuven Feuerstein, an Israeli psychologist who believed that the cognitive and social skills children acquire through their parents and culture, and which are often absent as a result of a problematic upbringing, can be instrumentally taught. We found Billy O'Neill, a trainer in Feuerstein's programmes and he has been at the heart of helping us embed Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment (FIE) into our curriculum.



In March 2017 we collaborated with the head of a nearby school and began to train all our staff including teachers, teaching assistants and pastoral staff in the Basic Feuerstein Enrichment Programme.

On the morning of day one we introduced the FIE programme to all the staff. We spent time discussing the rationale behind the programme and its use in schools, universities and industry and really tried to explore the issues we were facing as a staff serving a disadvantaged community.

In the afternoon, we began working on the 'Organisation of Dots' unit. This exercise is not for the slapdash, and definitely not for rushing, and that was the point of much of what was to come. The programme strips activities and functions back and reveals the steps that people who can perform them well, take towards being successful. Very simple activities regularly performed in a systematic way begin to lift that veil on what makes a good learner. The children in my conversation group had no problems identifying who in their class was good at learning, but they had enormous difficulties becoming one themselves.

Holy Grail

For many of us in the training sessions, this programme was the Holy Grail of teaching in schools such as ours. For teachers frustrated by children who tend to disrupt, rush into things impulsively, give up easily, can't work independently, forget instructions, are over emotional or lack empathy, there was now a way of positively responding to them, or as Billy would put it, a way of mediating these skills to them the child through their learning experiences with the programme.

We continued with half a day's training on a number of other modules (selecting what we felt would be most appropriate for our schools). The 'Organisation of Dots' exercises teach children how to be accurate, precise and how to plan their way through difficult situations. The 'Identifying Emotions' module encourages children to begin to look for the evidence to help them understand why others may be feeling the way they do and the 'Empathy to Action' modules provide a vehicle for extended individual, group and class discussions on whether other people have acted in an appropriate way. We then took what we had learned back to our classrooms.

Now every class from EYFS to Year 6 spends time on the programme each week. The teachers encourage children to discuss their views and base their opinions on logical and relevant evidence. The evidence may come from the pictures in front of them or from their own personal lived experience but in the end, they must always justify their opinions. One of the most beneficial parts of the programme for us is the constant reflection and verbalising of what the children are doing and doing well.

They may be concentrating on being accurate, they may be planning ahead or they may be justifying a thought with a good piece of evidence or, very importantly, generating a principle that can be used again in another situation. Teachers promote the new learning in other parts of the curriculum using the language shared in the Feuerstein sessions. Perhaps that accuracy will be carried into their maths work, or their logical evidence finding into their work in English, or even more importantly for our school, their work generating empathy principles, onto the playground.

Some principles generated in an 'Empathy to Action' lesson:

"Just feeling sorry for someone isn't enough, you need to do something to help."

"It is better to stop and think about the options before you decide what to do. Not every action is equally helpful."

Year 5 Pupils (11th January 2019)

There is so much more than this to the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment Programme, and as a school three years into our training, we are still not using every unit, but the culture of our school is shifting. The classrooms are calm spaces, the children are more empathetic and more able to acknowledge that another person may have a different view to them.

The teaching staff are aware that there is a solution, through the programme, to the challenges they face with certain pupils, and all staff are aware that the programme offers a positive way towards creating independence and self-regulation in all our children. The Feuerstein Enrichment Programme has provided us with a structure to consistently tackle the many outcomes of disadvantage in our school community. As a school in an area of high deprivation, we feel we now have a way to help children become independent and resilient learners with the soft skills they need within the constraints of the National Curriculum.

"I know there are disadvantaged pupils in your school, I just can't see them."

(Ofsted Inspector 2019)

Lawrence Crilly is head of Rimrose Hope School in Sefton. He is speaking with Billy O'Neil at the InclusivEd conference on March 18th, hosted by TeachingTimes.

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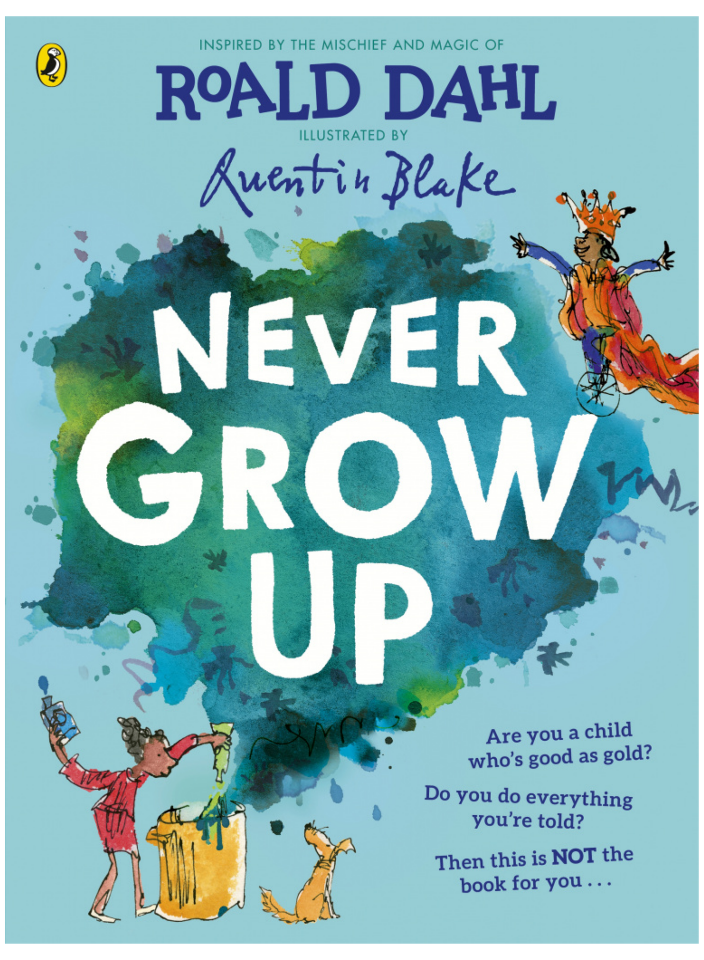
14th Jun 2021

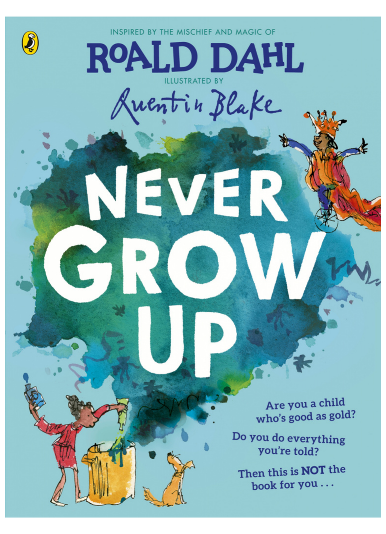
Inclusion

Book Talking

Annie Everall OBE, of Authors Aloud UK, reviews young children's books related to wellbeing and resilience. She will be writing a regular column for The Inclusion Journal.



We all know that books can inspire children and foster their love of reading, can help them learn new facts, explore or come to terms with situations they are dealing with in their lives and support their growth and development. On June 10th we will again be celebrating Empathy Day https://www.empathylab.uk/empathy-day. Empathy Day aims to spark a national conversation about building a more empathetic society, and help young people learn more about empathy and put it into practice. This first Book Talking piece focuses on picture books that support empathy, are ideal for sharing with children and that aim to help the reader validate their own emotions, understand what is like to be a child in a war torn city, celebrate love, friendship and community and also just experience the joy of being a child.



Never Grow Up

Inspired by Roald Dahl

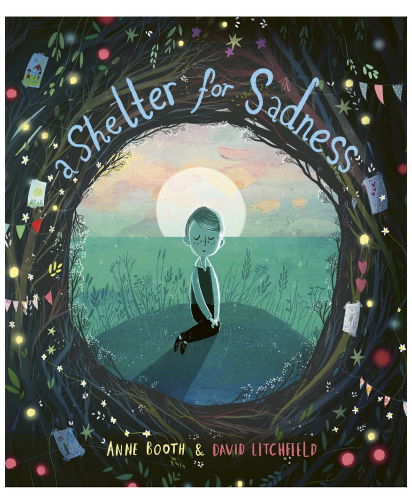
Illustrated by Quentin Blake

Puffin £12.99 2021

ISBN: 978-0241423103

This full-colour picture book is Inspired by the magic and mischief of Roald Dahl stories and features wonderful new illustrations by Quentin Blake, whose pictures have always captured the humorous essence of Roald Dahl's stories. Written in rhyme 'This book is for the kind of child – Who's SILLY, mischievous and WILD – Who wants to grow to TEN FEET TALL – Without GROWING UP at all' It celebrates mischief – makers and rule – breakers and tells children right from the front cover 'Are you a child who's good as gold? – Do you do everything you're told? Then this is not the book for you...' What it is really doing is encouraging children to think outside the box and to grow up to be curious, inventive, daring, creative and to never lose that sense of wonder, playfulness and fun that we experience as children. Quentin Blake says in his introduction to the book, that Roald Dahl always said 'never grow up, always down' which in essence means that as we grow into adults, we should always remember what it is like to be a child. There is much enjoyment to be had in the story and through the pictures, but the book offers lots to talk about with children and can also lead them into exploring Roald Dahl's books if they haven't already done so. It is a book to remind every grown up to throw off their sensible shawl and re-discover their inner child and to let children know – not to lose theirs as they grow up!

For ages 6+



A Shelter for Sadness

Written by Anne Booth

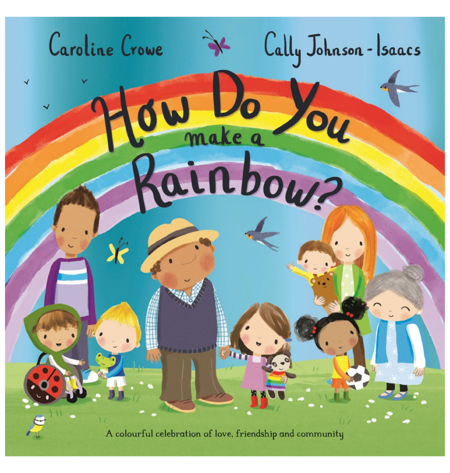
Illustrated by David Litchfield

Templar £12.99 2021

ISBN: 978-1787417212

Sadness comes to live with a small boy and he creates a safe space for his sadness. He builds a shelter for it and sometimes it is big, sometimes small, sometimes quiet and still and sometimes very loud and noisy. There are times when the boy will visit the shelter when he needs to and can talk to it or cry or say nothing at all. The boy knows that one day Sadness may come out of the shelter, and together they will look out at the world, and see how beautiful it is. Anne Booth was inspired to write the book by the words of Esther 'Etty' Hillesum, a Holocaust victim, who wrote: 'Give your sorrow all the space and shelter in yourself that is its due, for if everyone bears grief honestly and courageously, the sorrow that now fills the world will abate. But if you do instead reserve most of the space inside you for hatred and thoughts of revenge – from which new sorrows will be born for others – then sorrow will never cease in this world. And if you have given sorrow the space it demands, then you may truly say: life is beautiful and so rich.' This is an extraordinary picture book. David Litchfield's illustrations are stunning and work in perfect harmony with Anne Booth's text, creating an outstanding book, exploring both the nature of sadness and helping children understand the importance of making time and space for their own sadness. This is particularly important in our current times when many children may have experienced sadness and loss. The underpinning message of the book is that sadness is part of being human and can exist alongside happiness. It is a book that can open up difficult conversations with young and older children and a useful tool to support empathy, emotional literacy and mental health.

For ages 5+



How Do You Make A Rainbow

Written by Caroline Crowe

Illustrated by Cally Johnson – Isaacs

Macmillan Children's Books £6.99 2021

ISBN: 978-1529059526

A small child asks her Grandfather on a grey gloomy day how you make a rainbow and whether you paint them on the sky. He tells her that you make them grow out of kindness and hope – it's your friends, jam on toast, the glow you feel inside when you make someone proud and a hundred and one other small things. The last message of the book is 'Find the sunshine that's inside you and a rainbow starts to grow' and then you'll see your rainbow. A delightful rhyming picture book that reads aloud well and offers a warm re-assuring message for young children at a time when it is most needed. The warmth of the relationship between child and grandparent shines through the story, highlighting its own rainbow. Bright colourful illustrations work well with the text as does the colour palette chosen for each double page spread. The last few pages encourage children to make their own rainbows of the things they love.

For ages 3+

The Last Garden

Written by Rachel Ip

Illustrated by Anneli Bray

Hodder £12.99 2020

ISBN: 978-1444946345

In a war-torn country, Zara tends her garden – the last one that hasn't been destroyed by bombs. All the local children play in it and help tend it, until the day comes when the violence of war has escalated, it isn't safe in the city anymore and the community has to leave. Eventually the war ends, and the community can return to their homes. Although fearful of what they might find, to their joy they discover that through all the time they were gone, Zara's garden continued to grow. With their love and care they are able to bring the garden and their city back to life. The message of the book is really powerful and will give children hope that even in the darkest of times, things can get better – a message that is very appropriate today. It is also perfect to help children develop empathy and understanding for those children experiencing living in a war or having to leave their homes. The illustrations work in great harmony with the text and their visual depiction of children and a community experiencing war is very moving. Design, layout, text and illustrations combine to provide an outstanding book, one that opens up many opportunities for conversations with children and one that deserves a wide audience.

For ages 5+

Authors Aloud UK

Annie Everall OBE

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Author
Alix Robertson
06 Jul 2021

Inclusion

Young People On The Margins

How do they get there and how can we bring them back in?

Our society leaves too many young people behind. More often than not, these are
the most vulnerable young people, and it is through no fault of their own. In the eleven years since The Centre for Education and Youth was set up, our research has focused on getting under the skin of the issues that lead young people to become marginalised in the education system, and in turn, society.

Chapter I: Pushed out and left out: Understanding school exclusion

'Young People on the Margins' begins with CfEY Chief Executive Loic Menzies' experiences of teaching in North West London, where part of his job involved working with young people on the edge of exclusion. Loic explains the frustration of seeing a pupil who has real potential, but is also showing "complete unacceptable behaviour", beginning to slide "inexorably" away from the mainstream.

Young people can be pushed out of school in different ways, either through an authorised permanent or "fixed-term" exclusion, or through unofficial means, often referred to as "off-rolling". However, Loic explains that school exclusion has an impact on the qualifications a young person gets, their future employment, their risk of being involved in youth violence or criminality, and their mental health.

To protect against this slippery slope, we need changes from policy makers, organisations and practitioners working with young people directly. One of several suggestions Loic puts forward is for schools and alternative providers to develop federations, multi-academy trusts or other partnerships to make it easier for staff and expertise to move between different types of provision. This, he says, would also help pupils to access specialist support from within the mainstream, or to be reintegrated after leaving it.

Chapter II: Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

In chapter II, Bart Shaw, CfEY's Head of Policy, writes about a watershed moment in his career as a Geography teacher, when he realised how easy it can be to underestimate the capabilities of a young person with SEND. Fighting against these assumptions is the day-to-day reality for parents and carer of young people with SEND, Bart points out. They face an endless struggle in advocating for their children to ensure they can access to the right support that will enable them to thrive.

Part of the reason young people with SEND find themselves marginalised is because of negative attitudes to disability, stigma, and discrimination within society. These play out
in schools as they do everywhere else. Young people with SEND can find themselves marginalised in mainstream schools, due to issues such as social ostracisation by peers, informal exclusion from lessons, and the relatively low prioritisation of young people with SEND by school leaders.

Bart calls for more collaboration and cross-pollination between the special school and the mainstream sectors to tackle this problem. More movement of teachers and support
staff between special and mainstream provision would allow more sharing of ideas about how to improve practice when working with children with SEND in either setting, while also acting as helpful professional development that could encourage teachers to stay in the profession longer.

Chapter III: Mental health

I chose to write about mental health in this chapter, in part because of its impact on my childhood. I struggled with an eating disorder for years and have first-hand experience of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and the stigma that a mental health condition can bring. From my experience, one of the defining features of a mental health problem is the distance it puts between you and the people around you, and one of the signs of recovery, or coping at least, is rebuilding those connections and coming back in from the margins.

In my chapter I look at the different factors that can influence a young person's mental health, for example we know that teenage girls tend to be particularly at risk of certain types of mental health problems, especially between the ages of 17 and 19, and children from low-income families are four times more likely to experience mental health problems compared to children from higher-income families.

To support young people with mental health conditions, we need to identify mental ill health as early as possible and act quickly. The longer a person is dealing with mental ill health alone, the harder it becomes to unravel reinforcing behaviours and get to the root on the problem (which will be different for everyone).

I also call for more joined up thinking across services, which is a theme that connects a number of chapters in the book. Everyone talks about the need for joined up services but it's sometimes hard to know how to bring that about. A desire to show how to make this approach a reality was one of the driving forces behind our decision to write this book. Clear lines of communication are vital in ensuring meaningful, wraparound care.

Chapter IV: Area-based inequalities and the new frontiers in education policy

In this chapter, Dr Sam Baars, CfEY's Director of Research and Operations, presents his specialist topic of area-based inequalities. Sam looks at some of the key reasons why, after more than 50 years of area-based interventions in education policy, there are still huge disparities in young people's outcomes in the UK based on where they live. He reflects on some of the different schools and areas he's visited as part of his research and how some of them felt strangely similar despite being at opposite ends of the country.
Sam explains that area-based education policies have tended to target areas based on a broad notion of deprivation – is there deprivation here or not – rather than aiming to distinguish between different "types" of deprived area. How an area contributes to educational disadvantage is often "weakly articulated" in policy texts – in many deprived areas, including parts of London, young people's educational outcomes in the aggregate actually offer no particular cause for concern.

Sam argues that clearer understanding of how neighbourhood contexts shape young people's outcomes would strengthen efforts to tackle area-based inequalities and help us to spot common issues. We can upgrade the conversations we have about this issue by paying more attention young people's understandings of the places they live in and calling for policies that address the root causes of area-based inequalities.

Chapter V: Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller young people

In Chapter V, Ellie McLachy, Head of Research at CfEY, and Abi Angus, Research Associate, explore the barriers facing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people, whose outcomes have seen little change over the past century. At GCSE only 14% of Gypsy/Roma young people and 28% Irish Traveller pupils achieve grades 4–9 in GCSE English and Maths compared to 64% nationally, while less than 10% of pupils from these groups achieve strong passes (grade 5–9) at GCSE English and Maths.

GRT groups remain some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities in the country, facing racism and discrimination alongside cultural and material barriers such as a nomadic lifestyle and difficulty navigating official systems. This chapter includes the experiences of Cassie, a law graduate and Romany Gypsy who "bucked the trend" by entering and completing higher education, something that very few Romany Gypsy young people do. Cassie tells how even after years of hard work to access a leading academic institution, prejudice and bigotry continued to follow her.

"To have a lecturer make a joke about "pikeys" and for 200 people around me to be actually belly-laughing while I sat there knowing I'm from that community and actually "pikey" is a derogatory term... It's the fear of things like that, it's one of the reasons that people pull kids out of school and why they are scared of university..."

Ellie and Abi call on politicians to lead by example, making it clear that prejudice, discrimination, and racist remarks are unacceptable. Schools and youth organisations should work to build an inclusive ethos that is respectful of GRT culture. Teachers and support staff can play their part by taking a flexible approach to including pupils who travel, for example by allowing them to have a part-time timetable and providing resources which support distance learning.

Chapter VI: Children who come into contact with social services

A child's likelihood of going into care is influenced their family's income, but also where in the country they live, explains CfEY's Head of Engagement Will Hood in Chapter VI. As with access to other services such as support for SEND, there is a postcode lottery for these young people. Almost three quarters of children are placed within 20 miles of their family home and nearly 6 in 10 placements into care homes, children's homes and supported accommodation are out-of-area placements.

But it is not just going into care that affects young people's outcomes. Children in need of support from social services, but who are not in care, are more likely than their peers to be absent from school and are also more at risk of permanent exclusion than children who are looked after, although the latter are more likely to face a fixed term exclusion. Overall, children who have needed a social worker are 10 times as likely to be taught in Alternative Provision compared to their peers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, research by the Department for Education shows that children who have needed a social worker are half as likely to pass English and maths GCSEs as those who have not.

Will writes that it is vital that professionals coming into contact with children in care and on the edge of care ensure these children have the support they need. He argues that social workers and local authorities should wherever possible provide families with early help, for example through support with issues like substance abuse, domestic violence, and poor mental health. Rather than removing children once their families have reached crisis point, this could tackle some of the underlying reasons why parents find parenting difficult and help more families to stay together.

Chapter VII: Education without a place to call home

In this chapter of the book, former CfEY Associate Kate Bowen-Viner, who is currently studying for her PhD at the University of Bristol, tells the stories of young people trying to balance education and homelessness. Kate describes how, as an NQT, she placed a lot of importance on building a close connection between home and school in order to support her form group – but did not consider what the education system can do when young people have no home to go back to.

While official government data collections on youth homelessness are likely to be underestimates, they are still shocking. In 2018–19, 71,589 young people in England approached their local authority because they were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Kate explains that it is not just poverty that leads to youth homelessness, with Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups, the LGBTQ+ community, young offenders, and carer leavers all more likely to become homeless.

The young people's stories in this chapter are heart-breaking, describing experiences such as domestic abuse and bereavement. They tell of a lack of understanding from school or college staff, and the profound challenges that arise from having no reliable structure or safe base for day-to-day life. However, the young people Kate writes about also show impressive resilience and clear aspirations for the future, which deserve as much support as possible.

Kate highlights the need for teachers to be aware of warning signs that a young person might be experiencing homelessness, such as low or declining attendance, lack of engagement and concentration, or tiredness and a "dishevelled" appearance. She explains that practitioners should flag any concerns using safeguarding procedures, since legal frameworks mean that policymakers are obliged to provide many young homeless people with accommodation and support. Kate also stresses the importance of pastoral support and a flexible approach in supporting young people who are homeless to continue with their education as achieve their goals.

Chapter VIII: Conclusion

Building a fairer society and an equitable education system rests on bringing in young people on the margins. The promise that lies behind the arguments made in this book is that society can make this happen. Getting to grips with individual stories and identifying what makes young people vulnerable will enable us to intervene early and take action. The good news is that there are overlaps between the needs of the young people in this book, meaning that an approach that benefits one group is likely to benefit others. We must ensure society supports all young people, including those on the margins, to make a fulfilling transition into adulthood no matter what their story.

Alix Robertson, Associate at think and action-tank The Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY), started out as an English teacher in a secondary school, where she mentored vulnerable pupils. A desire to interrogate challenges in the education system led her to take an MA in journalism. She went on to work for sister papers FE Week and Schools Week, winning awards for her investigations, before moving into research.

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