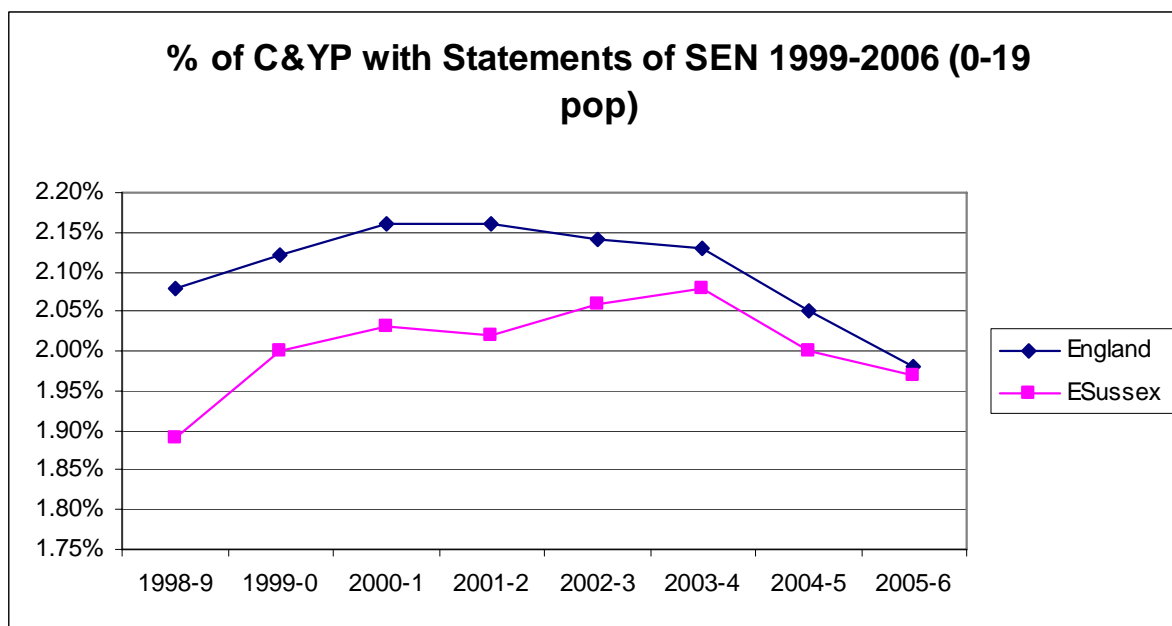


Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

Context

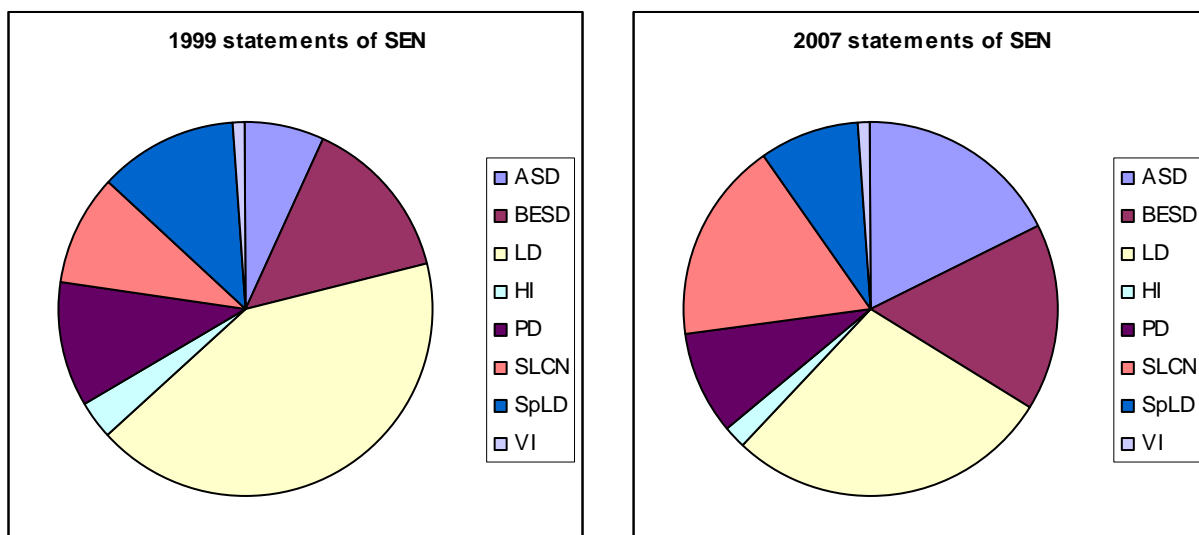
Using the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 definition and extrapolating from the proportion of disabled children estimated by the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit in the report ‘Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People’¹, it is estimated that there are around 7000 children and young people with disabilities in East Sussex. In January 2007 just over 2200 children and young people had statements for special educational needs (SEN); there were just over 4100 children at school action plus and just over 7100 children at school action under the SEN Code of Practice.



The proportion of the school aged population with a statement of special educational needs maintained by East Sussex has, for some time, been below the national average. Although currently falling, it is now close to the English average. The recent reduction in the proportion in East Sussex follows a period of time where the local trajectory was increasing against a national picture of gradual reduction. The proportion of statements actually maintained by the authority is much lower than the proportion of statements for all children and young people attending school in the county. This is because there is a high number of pupils attending independent and non-maintained schools in the county whose statements are maintained by other local authorities.

There has been a large increase in the number of statements for autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) rising from 150 in 1999 to 394 in 2007 and a large increase in statements for speech, language and communication difficulties (SLCN) rising from 208 in 1999 to 390 in 2007. Other areas of need have declined or remained steady. The proportion of statements for each category of need is shown in the pie charts below.

¹ ‘Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People’, Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, 2005



Approximately 6% of the children and young people with statements are from minority ethnic backgrounds and around 8% are looked after.

There are 10 special maintained special schools in the county. All have received good OFSTED inspections and Cuckmere House and Glyne Gap Schools have been assessed as outstanding in all aspects. Both Cuckmere House and Glyne Gap have also been awarded specialist SEN school status. East Sussex is one of only two local authorities which maintains two out of the current 26 specialist SEN schools in the country.

East Sussex has had a policy of co-locating its special schools with mainstream schools wherever possible and has been a pioneer in this field. Hazel Court School is co-located with a mainstream secondary school and the local further education college, Glyne Gap School is co-located with a primary school and local college and operates a fully inclusive nursery with an independent provider. The Lindfield School and Saxon Mount School each adjoin a mainstream secondary school. Grove Park School is currently being co-located with the local mainstream secondary school and sixth form.

There are also two non-maintained special schools and five independent special schools within East Sussex and a further three non-maintained and two independent special schools on our borders in Brighton and Hove. There are also high numbers of independent and non-maintained special schools (INMSS) in our other neighbouring authorities: Kent, West Sussex and Surrey.

In January 2007 1027 (46.0%) of children and young people with statements of SEN were placed in special education: 842 in maintained special schools and 185 in INMSS. Most placements in INMSS were day placements (72%).

Most children under age 5 with SEN and disabilities access mainstream foundation stage provision supported by the Early Years Teaching Support Service and by payments/bursaries to providers. A small number of children under five with very complex needs attend foundation stage provision in the special schools.

Provision for children with LDD in mainstream schools is good. 73% of primary schools and 67% of secondary schools inspected have received grade 2 or above for the progress of children with LDD. This compares well with the national averages (68% for primary and 56% for secondary) and with the average for our statistical neighbours (66% for primary and

64% for secondary). The two primary schools that have received a grade 4 for this aspect are well supported through a co-ordinated school support plan.

Performance on issuing proposed statements within 18 weeks excluding exceptions has been 100% since 2003/4 (BVPI43a). Performance on issuing proposed statements including exceptions is also very good with 95.8% meeting the timescale in 2005/6. Compliance with the other key timescales in the Code of Practice is also high, with 98% of requests for statutory assessments including exceptions responded to within 6 weeks; and 85% of final statements including exceptions issued within 26 weeks in 2005/6.

The Children's Disability Service provides a range of support for around 470 severely disabled children and their families, 5% of whom are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Three severely disabled children have a child protection plan and 32 are looked after. All looked after children have a qualified social worker. The Service provides a duty and assessment team, social work, specialist foster care, occupational therapy, outreach and family support, direct payments, holiday playschemes and short breaks. Health service staff provide support, advice and care alongside the teams when necessary

The Service operates two short break facilities: The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive, Eastbourne which provides seven beds nightly; and Acorns, Bexhill which has recently been fully refurbished and redesigned, and its capacity has increased from five beds on six nights per week to seven beds on seven nights per week. Both facilities consistently receive excellent inspection reports. Families also have access to short break placements with foster carers and other providers in the voluntary and private sectors. The short break fostering service received an excellent inspection report in 2006. Support for children with health care needs is given by appropriately skilled health staff when identified

During the last year the Children's Disability Service completed 75% of initial assessments within 7 days and 79% of core assessments within 35 days. All child protection conferences were held on time. All disabled children for whom there is a child protection plan have an allocated social worker. In 2006/7, transition plans were agreed for all young people who needed them.

East Sussex works closely with the Regional Partnership and is a key participant in the exceptional fee increase, benchmarking, annual review guidance for INMSS, the national contracts for INMSS and residential care, disagreement resolution and developing partnerships with INMSS projects in particular.

Strategic Planning

The Council undertook a review of all SEN provision in 2004/5. This resulted in a number of key actions which informed the priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan and (CYPP) underpin the SEN and Inclusion Strategy.

The Children's Trust governance structure includes a specialist reference group: the Disabled Children's Development Group (DCDG) which includes representatives of all key stakeholder groups. There are cross references to the CAMHS Commissioning partnership and strategy. There is a specialist sub-group of the Local Safeguarding Children Board focusing on the needs of disabled children.

In June 2006, following the inception of the Children's Services Department, the previously separate SEN and Children's Disability Teams, and the Parent Partnership were combined to form the new SEN and Disability Service. The Service has close links with other key teams within the Department and with health services across a range of organisations including the mental health trust with the responsibility for providing services for children

with LDD. Likewise, there are close links with Adult Social Care and planning meetings take place twice yearly, including Connexions and the Learning and Skills Council, to identify, plan for and track young people transferring between children's and adults' services.

A key priority for the internal management of the service is to develop processes and working practices that are fully integrated and to ensure that there is a common team approach. The establishment of integrated processes and practices with health professionals, alongside the development of a joint commissioning strategy, are also central to work plans for the service.

Key Achievements

- East Sussex has a well established, effective and highly regarded Early Support Programme (ESP) which provides key working support to over 150 families of children with the most complex and severe needs from 0-5 years old. There is an active and supportive parents' focus group for the ESP and the health service is an active partner in the initiative
- The multi-disciplinary Early Years Communication Team is an example of effective co-ordinated working involving the Early Years Teaching Support Service and the PCTs Speech and Language Therapy Service for children with speech, language and communication difficulties in the foundation stage.
- Multi-agency early years liaison meetings involving professionals from all key partner agencies plan support and provision for children with complex special educational needs and disabilities prior to school entry.
- The multi-agency ASD Monitoring and Support Groups provide co-ordinated support for schools and families of primary aged children with autism. Parents are active partners in the development of this initiative.
- 10 schools (special and mainstream) are working towards accreditation by the National Autistic Society
- Specialist educational provision has been reviewed. Key outcomes include: one school has been redesignated as catering for children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties with a programme of refurbishment to the residential facilities; the speech, language and communication support service in Eastbourne has been transferred to the management of a special school and extended its work to include autism and also has widened geographical coverage; another special school is in the process of being co-located with a mainstream secondary school; an ASD facility has been established at one mainstream secondary school which is acting as part of the DfES regional centre of expertise programme. One special school will operate a Year 12 transition class in partnership with the local FE college from September 2007.
- All schools set targets for the attainment of children vulnerable to underachievement including those with SEN and disabilities.
- Four special schools operate extensive after school provision including one which is making the full extended school child care offer.
- An integrated occupational therapy team has been established within the Children's Disability Service covering both social care and educational provision.
- There is a pooled budget with the PCTs for the provision of equipment for disabled children.
- Three speech and language therapy posts are funded by the County Council and are jointly managed with the Primary Care Trusts.
- The Acorns disabled children's short break unit has been substantially refurbished and has increased capacity.
- The number of short break carers has increased from 45 to 52 (15.5%) in 2006/7

- The number of families receiving direct payments has continued to increase, expanding from 40 to 45 (12.5%) in 2006/7.
- A Community Palliative Care team has been developed and now reaches in excess of 120 children and their families across East Sussex. This has some financial support from the PCTs and is 'hosted' by Demelza Childrens Hospice. Work is ongoing to further develop Continuing Health care 'packages' in order to maintain more complex needs children in their own homes and in school.
- There has been a significant number of activities to promote the involvement of disabled children and young people in decision making, for example: advocates regularly meet with children staying in short break care; a focused consultation was held with disabled young people as part of the review of information, advice and guidance.
- The Family Intensive Support Service (for disabled children with challenging behaviour) has been extended to cover a wider geographical area, funded by the CAMHS grant.
- A Consultant Psychiatrist, specialising in learning disability and a specialist mental health nurse have been commissioned, funded by the CAMHS grant.

Key Areas for Development 2007-8

- Develop Secondary ASD Monitoring and Support Groups.
- Additional specialist facilities attached to mainstream secondary schools for ASD.
- Increase specialist support for children with ASD and their families, including the appointment of specialist ASD youth workers to increase access to out of school and leisure opportunities, and supporting staff from the Children's Disability Service to undertake accredited courses in ASD.
- Increase the range of support that the primary ASD Monitoring and Support Groups are able to offer to children, families and schools.
- Increase the availability of out of school and leisure opportunities to young people with autism.
- Summer holiday playschemes operating in 5 special schools from summer 2007
- Establish Primary Speech, Language and Communication team including education and health professionals.
- Develop additionally resourced and skilled early years settings (for disabled children) in children's centre programme areas.
- Continue to support and develop specialist child minding networks for disabled children.
- Integration of all therapy services for disabled children.
- Develop the Continuing Health Care children's panel to include more joint decision making around complex needs children and home care provision.
- Restructure the Children's Disability Service to ensure smooth transition planning in collaboration with Connexions specialist advisers and workers from adult social care.
- Continue to expand the range of short breaks available for disabled children and their families.
- Implement the strategy for increasing the participation of disabled children and young people in strategic planning and service delivery.
- Continue to develop and increase parent participation through the parent steering group.