

Draft specification for nationally accredited training for teachers new to the role of leading coordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs

Contents

Annex 1

Section 1: Introduction and guidance 2 -7

Annex 2

Section 2: The requirements for training providers 8 - 11

Annex 3

Section 3: The minimum outcomes for teachers successfully completing nationally accredited SENCO training programme 12 – 14

Annex 1

Draft specification for nationally accredited training for teachers new to the role of leading coordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs

Section 1: Introduction and guidance

Introduction

- 1** All teachers taking the lead role for coordinating provision for pupils with special educational needs in a school – the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) – need particular attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills. These allow them to be effective in leading teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in their school, supporting and managing other staff, and ensuring that pupils receive high quality educational provision that enables them to make progress in their learning and towards the Every Child Matters outcomes of:
 - being healthy
 - staying safe
 - enjoying and achieving
 - making a positive contribution
 - achieving economic well-being.
- 2** This specification for nationally accredited training for SENCOs sets out the minimum requirements that participants and training providers must meet. However, we expect that some providers will wish to develop additional criteria and tailor their courses more closely to the needs of participants, and/or provide for them to progress to more advanced levels.
- 3** To successfully complete a nationally accredited training course, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) requires that teachers must be assessed against and demonstrate that they meet all the outcomes in Criterion 6 of this specification. Accredited SENCO qualifications should be validated at masters level, and we envisage they will normally provide 60 credits. The length of time required to complete the training will depend on the teacher's prior knowledge, understanding and skills. We expect that it would take around one year part time to complete the course for a teacher starting 'from scratch' without accreditation for prior learning and experience.
- 4** The draft specification is designed to make sure the training will help teachers new to the SENCO role to fulfil the responsibilities set out in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. The professional attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the minimum outcomes in Criterion 6 of the draft specification relate to role of a teacher leading coordination of special educational needs (SEN) provision in a school. They take account of the fact that schools organise provision for pupils with SEN in a range of ways to suit their particular circumstances and some of the functions associated with the SENCO role will often be done by a number of staff. These include support staff, who have a significant and important role to play in improving the achievement and well-being of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

Providing nationally accredited SENCO training

- 5 To deliver nationally accredited SENCO training, training providers must be approved for this by the Secretary of State. Many programmes are currently delivered by higher education institutions in partnership with others, including local authorities. Applications from these kind of partnerships are encouraged, and all applications must show how the programme will gain academic accreditation by a higher education institution.
- 6 Training providers need to apply to become approved as a provider of nationally accredited training for SENCOs. The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), on behalf of the DCSF, will periodically invite training providers to apply for approval. Providers submit an application demonstrating how their provision will meet the requirements of the specification and how it will help teachers meet the course outcomes, including the minimum outcomes in Criterion 6. Each application will be assessed by a panel including representatives from the TDA, DCSF and professionals in the field of teaching and learning with experience in relation to SEN and disability.
- 7 We envisage that successful providers will receive approval to deliver nationally accredited SENCO training for an initial period of five years. Their courses may then be inspected by Ofsted.

Guidance on the criteria training providers must meet:

- 8 The specification below sets out what providers need to cover in their applications. It contains six overarching criteria. Providers' applications must demonstrate how the provision they propose meets each of the criteria. The specific features they should cover are listed under each criterion. These statements will be used to decide which providers should be approved to deliver nationally accredited training for SENCOs.

Criterion 1

Programmes should have as their main objective and outcome the raised achievement of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities, through improving participants' professional knowledge, understanding and skills

- 9 The programme should reflect the principles of Every Child Matters¹ by giving participants the knowledge, understanding and skills to maximise the opportunities open to pupils with SEN and/or disabilities to improve their life chances and fulfil their potential. Throughout the specification, the 'achievement' of pupils includes achievement in relation to all five Every Child Matters outcomes – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being – not only academic attainment. The provision should also prepare participants to listen to the views of pupils and to work together with others, including other professionals, parents, carers and families, to protect pupils and help them to achieve.
- 10 Nationally accredited training programmes for SENCOs must be strongly rooted in practice in schools to help keep provision up to date and relevant to practice. They must offer effective continuing professional development (CPD) by: providing opportunities for participants to apply what they have learned, evaluate the effect on

¹ Every Child Matters: Change for Children, HMSO, (2004)

their practice, and develop their practice; promoting continuous enquiry and problem solving; making sure the training is provided by people with the necessary experience, expertise and skills and based on the best available evidence about teaching and learning. They should include opportunities for participants to undertake practical activity in a school, directly related to the outcomes set out in Criteria 6.

- 11 Programmes should help prepare participants to work effectively in leading teaching and learning for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities in their school.

Criterion 2

Providers should respond to participants' identified needs by offering appropriately differentiated provision that is of high quality, matched to participants' training and development needs, promotes progression towards the programme outcomes and makes best use of available resources

- 12 Courses should have the maximum possible impact on participants' practice and on the outcomes achieved by the pupils they work with. SENCOs will come from different backgrounds, work in a range of different contexts and have varying knowledge, skills and experience. As a result, they will have different strengths and training needs in relation to the course outcomes. To ensure that all participants gain maximum benefit from the course and that providers make the best use of the resources available to them, the provision should be matched as closely as possible to individual needs.
- 13 It is important that everyone who joins a nationally accredited training programme for SENCOs is able to benefit fully from it. So providers should make sure every teacher they accept for their programmes has enough knowledge, understanding and skills when they start to be likely to meet all the minimum outcomes by the end of the programme. If a candidate cannot meet the entry requirements, providers should offer them guidance about what they need to do to achieve the entry level, and liaise with the headteacher of the candidate's school.
- 14 The training should include an initial needs assessment in relation to the programme outcomes, to make sure it provides well targeted and cost-effective professional development for all participants. This assessment can help providers to tailor the course to participants' needs and suggest a 'personalised' set of outcomes for each participant. Courses should take full account of participants' prior knowledge and achievement. If a provider is sure at the beginning of a programme that the whole group already meets a particular group of outcomes, then the programme need not cover these in great detail, and the time can be spent looking in more detail at other aspects.
- 15 Providers may need to use the minimum outcomes set out in Criterion 6 to devise a needs assessment tool to help participants and tutors avoid getting assessments wrong by misinterpreting the scope or level of outcomes. For instance, a participant may think they already have the knowledge for an outcome, when actually the knowledge they have is out of date. Providers should not be too concerned about the absolute accuracy of needs assessment processes, as they are only a guide to help differentiate provision to meet participants' needs. In the end, all participants will need to meet all the minimum outcomes, and assessors should look for evidence against those outcomes throughout the programme to check the accuracy of the initial needs assessment.

- 16** In exceptional circumstances, providers may come across an applicant – for example an experienced teacher or teacher from SEN support services – who already seems to meet the programme outcomes. In these cases, providers should have arrangements for people to be assessed without any training. They will need to be assessed against, and demonstrate that they meet, all the minimum outcomes before being awarded the SENCO qualification. Providers themselves need to decide on the best way to achieve this and what it should cost.
- 17** As with all professional development, successfully completing a nationally accredited SENCO training programme is a stepping stone. Providers have a responsibility to ensure that, at the end of the programme, participants are encouraged to set objectives for their continuing professional development. The provider does not have to do this planning – objectives are set in discussion with line managers in the workplace. But providers should emphasise the importance of setting further objectives eg by building this into the end of their courses, providing planning tools, discussing further possibilities and opportunities and giving participants ideas to consider and discuss with their managers.

Criterion 3

Programmes should be delivered flexibly, without compromising appropriate progression and quality of outcome, to maximise access for participants

- 18** This criterion covers several aspects of accessibility for all candidates, so that everyone who wants to take a nationally accredited SENCO training programme will be able to do so.
- 19** Providers should show in their applications how their programmes promote equality of opportunity and good relations, by meeting the requirements of relevant equality legislation (including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) and the Equality Act 2006). For example, they should show how they are meeting the DDA Equality Duty by anticipating the needs of disabled candidates/participants and making provision for them; how they encourage and support candidates/participants to disclose their disabilities so that reasonable adjustments can be made; how they will promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; how they will encourage participation by disabled people in public life; how the needs of disabled candidates are reflected in promotional and pre-course materials; how they avoid discriminating against disabled candidates during selection, training (including on any visits and placements) and assessment.
- 20** Since teachers are likely to be undertaking the programme part time, the course should be as flexible as possible without compromising progression or quality of outcomes. To make sure programmes are as accessible as possible, those reviewing applications for approval will be looking for a range of flexible provision. Providers must demonstrate that they have done everything to make their provision as flexible as they possibly can, and offer a variety of study routes.

Criterion 4

Programmes should take into account the needs of stakeholders² and involve them in developing, delivering, evaluating and improving the provision

- 21** In their applications, providers must make clear how they have collected and taken account of evidence about the needs of stakeholders such as local schools and local authorities. This does not mean that stakeholders can decide on the content of programmes. However, providers should be clear about what stakeholders feel is important and, wherever possible, this should influence the content of the course.
- 22** Providers' applications should also show how stakeholders will be directly or indirectly involved in their programmes. For instance, they could act as guest speakers, as hosts for visiting participants, as 'distant' tutors or mentors for participants in the workplace, as moderators or assessors, or give evidence about the impact of SENCO training programmes.

Criterion 5

Programmes should be of a consistently high quality, subject to rigorous quality assurance procedures, with mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and improving their impact on participants' competence and the achievement of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities

- 23** The training programme must be supported by rigorous and relevant quality assurance (QA) mechanisms. It should be clear how both internal and external measures will be used to evaluate and improve the quality and impact of the course.
- 24** Providers will need to show how all aspects of their proposed programme will be subject to QA measures, including:
- recruitment and selection
 - needs assessment and target setting
 - programme content, including workplace-based elements
 - assessment against the programme outcomes, and
 - evaluation.

They should make clear the sources of evidence and the mechanisms for ensuring that the resulting information will affect future planning and development of the content and delivery of the programme.

- 25** The main purposes of the programme must be to raise the competence of participants and the achievement of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. We recognise that it may be difficult to gather evidence on the impact on pupils' achievement over the lifetime of the course. But providers should show how they take every opportunity to gather evidence of improvements in achievement that result from taking the programme. For example, they could encourage participants carrying out assignments to take baseline measures

² Stakeholders might include teachers, schools and other settings, employers, local authorities, parents and carers, children and young people, and others such as SEN associations and groups of disabled people and current and former participants on courses for SENCOs.

of their pupils before interventions, and to measure the impact on the pupils' achievements following the interventions and over time.

- 26** It is essential that candidates are suitable for work with children and young people. All candidates should be checked, following the principles set out in chapter four of Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education³. Providers should check that candidates do not have a criminal background that might prevent them from working with children or young people or as a teacher, and make sure they have not previously been excluded from teaching or working with children or young people. They should contact previous employers to check that there were no concerns about the candidate's conduct and that there are no outstanding disciplinary issues that would give cause for concern. As part of their recruitment and selection procedures, providers should assure themselves that all candidates they accept on their courses have had the appropriate background checks to allow them to work with children and young people.⁴ Participants will be employed as teachers when they take the course, so they are likely to have had a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enhanced disclosure check. However, if a candidate has not worked in a school or FE college in a post that involves regular contact with children or young people in the past three months, they would need to get a CRB enhanced disclosure.

Criterion 6

The requirements for successfully completing the programme should include the minimum outcomes (annex 3) so that participants who successfully complete nationally accredited training for SENCOs make maximum impact on practice

- 27** In their applications for approval, providers should demonstrate how they will ensure that only candidates who have shown that their professional attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills reach at least the minimum outcomes in annex 3 of this specification will be awarded the qualification.
- 28** These are minimum requirements – providers may wish to develop programmes that go beyond them. The way the minimum outcomes are constructed recognises that the coordination of provision for pupils with SEN is organised in a range of ways by different schools, and that the functions associated with the SENCO role may be carried out by a number of different people. They are designed to enable teachers to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they will need to work as the *lead* SENCO.

³ Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education, DCSF 2006

⁴ As stipulated by The School Staffing (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2006, School Staffing (England) (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 2006, and Further Education (Providers of Education) (England) Regulations 2006.

Annex 2

Draft specification for nationally accredited training for teachers new to the role of leading coordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs

Section 2: The requirements for training providers

The specification for nationally accredited training for SENCOs is set out below. It has at its heart three purposes, designed to ensure that these training programmes:

- are of a consistently high quality
- help to raise the achievement and improve the well-being of children and young people in relation to all five Every Child Matters outcomes
- are easily accessible to people wishing to take them.

1 Programmes should have as their main objective and outcome the raised achievement⁵ of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities, through improving participants' professional knowledge, understanding and skills

To be successful, applications for approval to run nationally accredited SENCO training programmes must demonstrate that the programme will:

- 1.1 have a clear focus – in the programme's aims, objectives, content and assessment – on raising the achievement of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities and on improving their well-being
- 1.2 make strong links to effective practice in schools
- 1.3 reflect recent research and inspection evidence and important developments and innovations relating to special educational needs and disability
- 1.4 develop participants' understanding of current legislation and government policies and initiatives on SEN and disability
- 1.5 develop participants' skills in consulting children and young people about issues that affect them
- 1.6 develop participants' skills in advising, supporting and collaborating with colleagues, within and beyond the school, to meet the needs of children and young people
- 1.7 develop participants' skills in advising, supporting and working in partnership with parents and carers

⁵ Throughout this document the 'achievement' of children and young people should be taken to include achievement in relation to all five Every Child Matters outcomes, not just academic attainment.

1.8 enable participants to make an impact on practice by meeting the programme outcomes

1.9 involve rigorous assessment of participants against all of the programme outcomes.

2 Providers should respond to participants' identified needs by offering appropriately differentiated provision that is of high quality, matched to participants' training and development needs, promotes progression towards the minimum programme outcomes and makes best use of available resources

To be successful, applications for approval to run nationally accredited SENCO training programmes must demonstrate that:

2.1 the provider has arrangements in place to take account of and accredit prior study and experience

2.2 each participant's training and development needs will be assessed in relation to the programme outcomes before the course, and this will be used to set an individual training plan and a personalised set of outcomes for each participant, which takes full account of their prior knowledge and achievement

2.3 in exceptional circumstances, suitably experienced candidates will be able to present themselves for assessment against the programme outcomes through an 'assessment-only' route

2.4 the provision is of high quality, tailored to individuals' circumstances and their training and development needs, offers effective continuing professional development which promotes progression towards the programme outcomes, and is cost-effective

2.5 participants who complete the programmes successfully will be helped to consider further professional targets.

3 Programmes should be delivered flexibly, without compromising appropriate progression and quality of outcome, to maximise access for participants

To be successful, applications for approval to run nationally accredited SENCO training programmes must demonstrate that the programme will be accessible and flexible, without compromising progression and the quality of outcomes, by:

3.1 complying with all relevant duties under equalities laws to enable all participants to access and participate fully in the programme – eg making reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates and participants

3.2 offering flexible ways of delivering courses⁶ – for example, allowing participants to start their training at different times or to cover parts of the course in a different order or in different modes (eg taught, blended or e-learning, full time and part time).

3.3 If the programme uses e-learning, the application for approval should show that:

- participants will be able to get direct support from tutors and peers
- there are arrangements for supporting participants between face-to-face sessions
- ICT will be used effectively in teaching and learning, and for effective communication between providers and schools, participants and tutors, between tutors and between participants.

4 Programmes should take into account the needs of stakeholders⁷ and involve them in developing, delivering, evaluating and improving the provision

To be successful, applications for approval to run nationally accredited SENCO training programmes must give:

4.1 clear evidence that the provision will reflect evidence about the needs of the main stakeholders

4.2 details of how stakeholders have directly or indirectly influenced the development and improvement of the programme

4.3 details of how stakeholders will be involved, directly or indirectly, in evaluation and other aspects of the provision.

5 Programmes should be of a consistently high quality, subject to rigorous quality assurance procedures, with mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and improving their impact on participants' competence and the achievement of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities

Applications for approval to run nationally accredited SENCO training programmes should show:

5.1 the range of internal and external evaluation methods they could use, and how the evidence gathered will be used to improve the quality and impact of the programme

5.2 that the provider has systems in place to make sure candidates accepted onto the programme have enough prior knowledge, understanding and skills to benefit from the programme and to meet the programme outcomes by the end of the course

⁶ Providers need to describe how they have addressed flexibility in the delivery of their SENCO programmes. The provision does not need to include all the features given as examples.

⁷ Stakeholders might include teachers, schools and other settings, employers, local authorities, parents/ and carers, children and young people, and others such as SEN associations and groups of disabled people and current and former participants on SENCO courses.

- 5.3 that they have systems in place to verify that candidates accepted onto the programme have a current Criminal Records Bureau enhanced disclosure check in line with legal requirements, and any other appropriate background check, to make sure they are suitable to work with children and young people
 - 5.4 that the provider has suitably qualified and experienced staff to deliver the programme, with up-to-date knowledge and skills in the relevant specialist area
 - 5.5 that participants will have access to a range of specialist expertise and appropriate, high-quality placements
 - 5.6 that the provider can offer enough specialist teaching resources (including ICT and other specialist technology), relevant to training SENCOs, to enable all participants to reach the programme outcomes
 - 5.7 how the provider will make sure that everyone involved in delivery and assessment (eg tutors or mentors) understand their roles and responsibilities and have the knowledge, understanding and skills to carry them out to a high standard
 - 5.8 that the provider can ensure that assessments will be consistent, reliable and accurate across the programme, and that they will be moderated
 - 5.9 how the provider will evaluate the quality, standards and impact of the programme on participants' competence and confidence, and on the achievement of children and young people – giving specific evidence and explanation of the methods and measures to be used – eg regularly requiring participants to evaluate improvements in their pupils' achievements as a result of particular aspects of their practice.
- 6 The requirements for successfully completing the programme should include the minimum outcomes (annex 3) so that participants who successfully complete nationally accredited training for SENCOs make maximum impact on practice**

Annex 3

Draft specification for nationally accredited training for teachers new to the role of leading coordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs

Section 3: The minimum outcomes for teachers successfully completing nationally accredited SENCO training programme

The following national minimum outcomes reflect the professional attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills required to work as a SENCO.

To successfully complete a nationally accredited training programme for special educational needs coordinators, teachers must show that they have the following attributes, skills and knowledge:

Professional attributes:

- Establish fair, respectful, supportive and constructive relationships with pupils with SEN and/or disabilities and with their parents or carers
- Gain the commitment of colleagues, including the headteacher and senior leaders, to improving the outcomes achieved by pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
- Prioritise work, manage their time effectively and delegate responsibilities and tasks appropriately, making sure they are carried out effectively
- Anticipate and resolve problems, make well founded decisions and exercise sound judgement on provision for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
- Express themselves clearly in speech and in writing, and listen to and understand the views of others
- Draw on research evidence and other external sources of advice to improve their own and their colleagues' practice
- Keep up to date on developments and take responsibility for their own CPD on SEN and disability matters

Professional knowledge and understanding:

- Know and understand relevant laws and associated guidance on SEN, including the policies and procedures set out in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, as well as their implication for the school, the SENCO and others, and how to put them into practice
- Know and understand the principles and outcomes of Every Child Matters and how the SENCO can help children to achieve those outcomes

- Know and understand the relevant laws on disability equality and the actions these laws require to support pupils with disabilities, and how they might best be carried out
- Know and understand how children develop and how their development can be affected by a range of factors, including SEN and/or disabilities and the physical and social environment for learning
- Know and understand the most common types of SEN and disabilities – including behavioural, emotional and social needs, specific learning difficulties (including dyslexia), speech, language and communication needs, autistic spectrum disorders and moderate learning difficulties – and how they can affect children’s learning
- Have a critical understanding of a range of approaches, strategies and resources for assessment, planning, teaching and learning, including ICT, and know how to use them effectively to remove barriers to learning and personalise provision for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
- Know and understand the principles of school self-evaluation and improvement and how they relate to improving outcomes for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
- Know about best practice and the outcomes of research in meeting children’s special educational needs
- Know and understand the scope and role of external agencies, and how to get specialist support and resources for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities

Professional skills:

- Working closely with senior colleagues and governors, advise on and influence the strategic development of an inclusive ethos, policies and priorities for developing the school and curriculum, and for using resources – so that all pupils have access to the curriculum, can make good progress and take part in the wider life of the school
- Identify pupils who may have SEN and/or disabilities (using classroom observation, data, assessment and other forms of monitoring), set appropriately challenging targets for their learning, plan interventions to meet their needs, geared to removing or minimising barriers to learning, and review their progress:
 - use assessments from a range of professionals to help develop appropriate teaching and learning approaches for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
 - use summative assessments, including national tests, to track pupils’ progress and change programmes appropriately
 - encourage other teachers to develop formative assessment for all pupils, with specific consideration of approaches for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities

- identify in good time any special arrangements pupils need for national tests and examinations, and work with colleagues to put them in place (in classroom practice and in the tests and examinations themselves)
- Use tools such as provision mapping and management to plan provision for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, and identify ineffective or missing provision
- Deploy and manage staff effectively to support pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
- Support the professional development of colleagues in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities – by observing learning and teaching and providing advice and feedback, direct teaching and modelling effective practice, coaching and mentoring, and delivering or arranging training and professional development
- Review and evaluate, with other staff, the effectiveness of provision for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities – to inform the school’s self-evaluation and improvement planning
- Ensure that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities are involved, whenever appropriate, in planning, agreeing, reviewing and evaluating provision made for them, by helping colleagues to achieve constructive working relationships with them and promoting a culture where pupils with SEN and/or disabilities are engaged in their own learning and achieve success
- Liaise effectively with parents and carers of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities to promote their learning and development
- Work in partnership with professionals in other services and agencies, including voluntary organisations, to develop a coherent and coordinated approach to supporting pupils with SEN and/or disabilities