

# Lamb Inquiry

Special educational needs and parental confidence

**Report to the Secretary of State  
on the  
Lamb Inquiry Review of SEN and  
Disability Information**

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April 29<sup>th</sup> 2009**

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/lambinquiry/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/lambinquiry/)

## **1. Introduction**

1. The SEN and Disability Information Review was triggered by Lamb Inquiry meetings with parents and the identification of significant failures to provide statutorily required information. The failure to comply with statutory obligations speaks of an underlying culture where parents and carers<sup>1</sup> of children with SEN can too readily be seen as the problem and as a result parents lose confidence in schools and professionals. As the system stands it often creates 'warrior parents' at odds with the school and feeling they have to fight for what should be their children's by right; conflict in place of trust.

2. It does not and should not have to be like this. I have seen for myself the difference that schools can make with good information, and particularly with good communication: the engagement of parents for the benefit of their child's progress; trust in place of conflict.

3. The content of information, though crucial, is only part of the story. It is the involvement of the parent in the process of discussion and engagement about their child with the school that creates confidence. Such confidence can sustain working relationships even in situations where there is not always agreement about provision. Where this is lacking, inevitably trust diminishes and so does the potential for a good working relationship between parent and school.

4. The recommendations in this report suggest a new framework for the provision of SEN and disability information: a framework that puts the relationship between parent and school back at the heart the process; trades adherence to a laundry list of rules for clear principles to guide that relationship; and strengthens compliance where requirements are not followed.

## **2. The current commission**

5. The Lamb Inquiry was established to investigate a range of ways in which parental confidence in the SEN system of assessment and provision might be improved. One of the key sources of evidence for the Inquiry is the work of the eight innovative projects which are exploring a range of ways in which parental confidence might be improved.

6. In June 2008 I reported to the Secretary of State on the selection of the Lamb Inquiry projects. In December I wrote to him presenting initial evidence from early meetings of the Inquiry with parents. These meetings highlighted failures to comply with a number of SEN and disability requirements. At that point it was not the weight of evidence but rather the principle at stake and the

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<sup>1</sup> Through this report I use 'parents' to refer to parents, carers and those with parental responsibility.

fact that many of the failures in compliance created gaps in information for parents and had a significant impact on parental confidence.

7. In his reply, the Secretary of State asked me to carry out a review of SEN and disability information requirements with a view to achieving a number of objectives:

- meeting the needs of parents;
- providing greater transparency in the system;
- providing a clearer focus on outcomes for children with SEN and disabled children;
- improving compliance with the duties
- taking account of proposals on 21<sup>st</sup> century schools and school report cards.

8. The Secretary of State asked me to report to him in April 2009. This report is in fulfilment of this commission.

9. To support the Inquiry in carrying out the information review, the DCSF commissioned independent research. My report draws heavily on the research carried out by Capita Strategic Children's Services.<sup>2</sup> Their report is our main source of evidence and it accompanies my report on the Lamb Inquiry website.

10. I want to acknowledge the contribution of the Lamb Inquiry Reference Group, the networks they represent and my group of Advisers. It would not have been possible to carry out the research in the very tight timescale available to us without their contribution and the contribution of those in the networks who circulated questionnaires, responded to questionnaires and came to meetings.

### **3. Background to the current review**

11. In 1978 the Warnock Report was explicit about the importance to children's progress of the relationship between parents and the school:

*9.19 The relationship between parents and the school which their child is attending has a crucial bearing upon the child's educational progress. On the one hand if parents are to support the efforts of teachers they need information and advice from the school about its objectives and the*

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<sup>2</sup> Capita (2009) *Children's Plan One-Year-On Commitments: Information for Parents of Children and Young People with SEN and Disabilities*

*provision being made for their child: on the other, a child's special needs cannot be adequately assessed and met in school without the insights that his parents, from their more intimate experience of him, are able to provide.*<sup>3</sup>

12. Parents need information if they are to be partners in their child's education. SEN and disability legislation has recognised this need and specifies the information that schools and local authorities need to provide. However, much of the research identifies shortfalls in compliance with the requirements.

#### *SEN information*

13. In 2003 the Advisory Centre for Education<sup>4</sup> surveyed all 150 local authorities and identified only 10 who published all the required SEN information. One of the most significant shortfalls was in providing information on:

*the element of special educational provision for children with SEN but without statements which the local education authority expect normally to be met from maintained schools budget shares and that element of such provision that the authority expect normally to be met by the authority from funds which it holds centrally.*<sup>5</sup>

14. The findings of the ACE survey are borne out by other reports.<sup>6,7</sup>

15. The ACE survey also identified a number of local authorities with exemplary policies, carefully developed in conjunction with schools and with parental involvement. The report identified the benefits of having this information widely available and understood. A number of other reports, most recently, the NatCen report (in draft)<sup>8</sup> highlight the same information as being critical to clarity between schools, local authorities and parents about the respective responsibilities of schools and local authorities.

16. Other elements of the required information, such as information on training, advice and support in the local authority area, are clearly of benefit to schools as well as to parents. Schools need to know how to access additional support and expertise, just as much as parents do.

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<sup>3</sup> HMSO (1978) *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* London:HMSO

<sup>4</sup> ACE Bulletin 112, April 2003

<sup>5</sup> The Special Educational Needs (Provision of Information by Local Education Authorities) (England) Regulations 2001

<sup>6</sup> MENCAP (2008) *Just not a priority: schools and disability equality*

<sup>7</sup> Wilkins, L (2008) *Learning the hard way: a strategy for special educational needs* Policy Exchange/Centre Forum

<sup>8</sup> Penfold C, Cleghorn N, Tennant R, Palmer I, Read J (in draft) *Parental Confidence in the Special Educational Needs Assessment, Statementing and Tribunal System: a qualitative study*. National Centre for Social Research for DCSF

17. At a school level, there are equivalent concerns about particular aspects of information that are more likely to be left out of schools' SEN policies. Ofsted's progress monitoring, following the publication of the first SEN Code of Practice (DES 1994) and Circular 6/94 *The Organisation of Special Educational Provision*, both which included explicit information requirements, reported:

*All the schools visited had an SEN policy and in most schools it complied broadly with the guidance contained in DfEE Circular 6/94.... schools continue to find it difficult to state their criteria for 'evaluating the success of the school's SEN policy', or to indicate how 'the allocation of resources to and among pupils with SEN' is made. The weakest policies omitted references to these sections completely.*<sup>9</sup>

18. Again, this information is identified, most recently in the research commissioned for the Lamb Inquiry,<sup>10</sup> as being important to parents' understanding of what they can expect from the school. Information which may not seem important to schools and local authorities may be critical to transparency for parents.

19. Many of the Lamb Inquiry projects are focusing on much more detailed sharing of information with parents. In due course, the projects will be able to contribute to the evidence of the impact of this on parental confidence.

#### *Disability information*

20. Issues about the shortfall in compliance arise in respect of published policies on disability as well. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the SEN and Disability Act 2001) brought in requirements on schools and local authorities to publish accessibility plans and strategies. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 brought in a requirement on public bodies, including schools and local authorities, to publish a disability equality scheme.

21. MENCAP surveyed 40 schools from 9 local authorities and found that:

*Across all 40 schools only 7 were able to provide on request a document called a 'DES' or a draft. Only 1 of these documents meets the legal requirements of the DDA 2005. Only 1 of the 40 schools has published a DES on their school website. It is starkly clear that schools are not making disability equality a priority.*<sup>11</sup>

22. Other reports have identified similar shortfalls.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ofsted (1997) *The SEN Code of Practice: two years on, The implementation of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs*. A second report covering 1996/7 London: HMSO

<sup>10</sup> Capita (2009) *Children's Plan One-Year-On Commitments: Information for Parents of Children and Young People with SEN and Disabilities*

<sup>11</sup> MENCAP (2008) *Just not a priority: schools and disability equality*

<sup>12</sup> House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2006) *Special Educational Needs: Third report of Session 2005-06*

23. The development of a disability equality scheme requires the involvement of disabled people. The Inquiry has seen the benefits where schools have involved disabled pupils in the development of the school's scheme: this provides insights into what makes school life difficult for disabled pupils, what frustrates their learning and participation; and disabled pupils come up with practical, often simple, suggestions for how the school might make changes. These often focus on improved anti-bullying procedures and improved access to learning and have significant potential to improve outcomes for disabled pupils.

#### *Improving communication*

24. The research commissioned for the Lamb Inquiry SEN and Disability Information Review identified the need for a range of information for parents but also the need for face-to-face meetings:

*The main issues to emerge from the initial consultation were that:*

- *Parents need information:*
  - *To help them understand their child's needs and to make sure that they get the support that they need;*
  - *That is easy to find, easy to understand and trustworthy;*
- *Parents need to know what they can expect from their child's school and what support is provided by the local authority;*
- *Many parents are interested in wider information on outcomes achieved by their children;*
- *Parents would like to have someone who they know well, who knows their child well and whom they trust to help them find out what they need to know.<sup>13</sup>*

25. Further consultation identified the need for a more personalised approach to information:

*Overall therefore, the strongest support from parents was in relation to recommendations that would improve the ease of access to, the transparency of and support for the use of current information, with less strong support (although still a majority regarding them as beneficial) for recommendations relating to the provision of quantitative data on both the performance of children and the system as a whole. This could be summarised as a desire for greater personalisation of SEN and disability services, or perhaps as a desire for a cultural change towards a more consumer focused / customer service driven approach.<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Capita (2009) *Children's Plan One-Year-On Commitments: Information for Parents of Children and Young People with SEN and Disabilities*

<sup>14</sup> Capita (2009) *Children's Plan One-Year-On Commitments: Information for Parents of Children and Young People with SEN and Disabilities*

26. A more tailored approach to sharing information with parents needs to recognise how their need for information changes over time. When a child is first identified as having a special educational need, the school must inform the child's parent that special educational provision is being made for him because they think he has special educational needs. Information provided at this point needs to make clear what this means, for the child, for the parents, what the school will do, what parents can expect. At other stages, parents may need information from different services and information about support from the voluntary sector. Parents have particular information needs at times of transition.

27. Parent partnership services have an important role to play here, as does web-based information. However, different needs at different times mean that personal contact with professionals, who recognise changing needs, is critical to maintaining parental confidence. Pain<sup>15</sup> recognised personal contact as a key factor in the provision of information to parents of children with SEN. My Inquiry, and particularly our research, has reaffirmed that position. No information system will be valued that does not make appropriate provision for face-to-face communication.

*...although it is important to ensure that a wide range of information is widely and easily available to parents of children with SEN/disability, using all reasonable channels and methods, their principal need is for the support of trusted and supportive practitioners who:*

- *Are well informed, able to help parents understand what they need to know at any particular stage in their child's development and, where necessary, to interpret the information that they are given;*
- *Honest – clear and open about the limits of their knowledge and prepared to seek further guidance where necessary;*
- *Trustworthy and, where necessary, independent;*
- *Recognize that information flows both ways – parents can provide vital information as well.*<sup>16</sup>

28. Parents in our research were clear that they wanted the system to work for their children, *'the way it does for everyone else.'* Current developments in parent engagement and information sharing for all parents provide opportunities for including SEN and disability information. These developments are more focused on progress and outcomes, for example the proposals for school report cards. Greater sharing of outcomes and performance measures is mirrored in other developments across the public services. A small scale literature review undertaken as part of the Inquiry noted that:

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<sup>15</sup> Pain, H (1999) *Coping with a child with disabilities from the parents' perspective: the function of information* Child Care, Health and Development Vol 25: 4 pp 299-311

<sup>16</sup> Capita (2009) *Children's Plan One-Year-On SEN Commitments: Information for parents of children and young people with SEN and disabilities*

*The basic nature of the relationship between parents and professionals (or service providers and consumers) has changed fundamentally. The previous relationship model of expert professional and ignorant lay-person is no longer relevant. Professionals have one sort of knowledge, the patient, client or parent has expert knowledge of their situation.*<sup>17</sup>

29. This changed relationship has to be reflected in any model of information provision. Expectations affect the value given to information in any public service. A key task of information in encouraging confidence in a world of high expectations is to help a service demonstrate that it can do its job.

## **4. Recommendations**

30. In making recommendations, I want to bring about a significant change in four key areas:

- communication and engagement with parents rather than standard information;
- a reduction in the specific SEN requirements in favour of covering SEN and disability in information for all children;
- an increased focus on outcomes for disabled pupils and pupils with SEN;
- tighter quality assurance and accountability for meeting streamlined requirements.

### **4.1 Principles**

31. Communication is a much wider issue than the provision of information. However, communication is underpinned by a sharing of written and publicly available information. A public service, funded to meet public objectives should be sharing, publicly, information on how they go about their work. We need to ensure that parents can access the information that they need, when they need it, in ways that are convenient to them and that include face-to-face discussion with those who are working with their child.

32. The research we commissioned was clear about the importance of wider issues of communication: of trusted and supportive practitioners who are well-informed, but clear about the limits of their knowledge, who are trustworthy and who listen. The research highlighted the importance of face-to-face

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<sup>17</sup> Peacey N and Peacey L (2009) *Confidence in public services: evidence from studies and articles on confidence in public services*

communication between schools, local authorities and other agencies on the one hand and parents and carers on the other. One of the respondents to the research said:

*Personal contact is the beginning and end of confidence.*<sup>18</sup>

33. The style of communication both affects and is a reflection of the working relationships between professionals and parents. The worst communication that we saw generated significant levels of hostility:

*Both our daughter and us were treated as a nuisance and dislike was obvious.*<sup>19</sup>

34. The best communication that we saw engendered impressive levels of confidence in schools and local authorities:

*I have a lot of confidence in the school; knowing that contact is easy makes for confidence.*<sup>20</sup>

35. Importantly for many parents of disabled children and children with SEN, good communication was often as much about the capacity of the school or service to listen to them as to talk to them.

36. A significant shift is required to improve the interaction between parents and carers on the one hand and schools and children's services on the other. Parents need assurance that they will be engaged in a positive dialogue with their child's school, that relevant information will be provided and that the way schools and services operate will be transparent. To achieve this we need a framework setting out what schools and children's services will do and what parents and carers can expect.

37. Aiming High for Disabled Children sets out a 'core offer', a set of expectations for how disabled children and their families will be informed and involved as their needs are assessed and provided for. The core offer covers:

- information and transparency;
- assessment;
- participation and feedback.

38. The impact of the core offer goes wider than the provision of information

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<sup>18</sup> Capita (2009) *Children's Plan One-Year-On Commitments: Information for Parents of Children and Young People with SEN and Disabilities*

<sup>19</sup> Parent evidence to the Lamb Inquiry

<sup>20</sup> Parent evidence to the Lamb Inquiry

and touches on wider aspects of interaction between services and parents and carers. Nevertheless the elements of the core offer provide a secure foundation for engaging with parents and a set of expectations that are central to improving parental confidence. This is crucial to the wider objectives of my Inquiry and therefore:

**(1) I recommend that the principles of the core offer developed through Aiming High for Disabled Children are extended to provide a framework for engagement by schools and children's services with parents of children with special educational needs.**

39. I intend that the extension of the core offer to all schools and children's services will create a cultural shift in the way schools and services interact with parents. Many of my subsequent recommendations are framed in the context of this new contract with parents. They do not work without it.

## **4.2 Practicalities: who publishes what and where**

40. Parents often do not know what information should be available to them. One parent told us:

*I don't know what I don't know.<sup>21</sup>*

41. The core offer shifts responsibility: it means that parents can expect to be provided with relevant information, rather than having to find it out for themselves.

42. Some of the difficulties in ensuring the availability of information relate to the separate nature of SEN and disability information. I take the view that where information can be provided in a more mainstream and more public place, it should be. It is more visible, more likely to be provided and can signpost more detailed information.

### *School level information on SEN and disability*

43. At a school level, I want to look first at what SEN and disability information needs to be in the mainstream of school information.

44. In their prospectus, schools are currently required to report on their SEN policy, their disability equality scheme and their accessibility plan. We are not confident that this is the most relevant or important SEN and disability information to provide at the level of the prospectus. Our contact with parents suggests that the most important information at this level would be the name of the person who can give parents more information about the school's approach to SEN and who can put them in touch with other relevant organisations. The

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<sup>21</sup> Parent evidence to the Lamb Inquiry

SEN and disability information required in the school prospectus should be reviewed alongside the development of the school report card and in the light of the relationship between the school prospectus and the school report card.

45. The school report card will also provide information on attainment and progress. This should include a measure of the school's success in promoting the attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs. This should be an inclusive measure that does not separate pupils with SEN from their peers. Work would need to be done to establish the feasibility of such a measure.

**(2) I recommend that current policy developments in parent engagement should take full account of disabled children and children with SEN.**

46. In particular I think that:

- the school report card should include a measure of the progress and attainment of pupils with special educational needs;
- online reporting should include the more detailed reporting on the progress of children with SEN;
- the proposed development of home-school agreements should include the principles of the core offer for parents of children with SEN.

47. Where other school policies can provide a vehicle for conveying information about the school's approach to their work with children with SEN, this vehicle should be used rather than a separate SEN vehicle, for example:

- school teaching and learning policies, recommended by Sir Alan Steer, should explicitly include how disabled pupils and pupils with SEN are taught and how they are included into all the educational opportunities of the school;
- information on extended day provision should specifically show how disabled pupils and pupils with SEN are included.

48. To the extent that policies on how the school works with pupils with SEN can be incorporated into 'mainstream' policies, the requirements of an SEN policy can be reduced and streamlined with other requirements.

49. There are currently 17 elements in the school SEN policy requirements. They include requirements to say who the SEN co-ordinator is at the school and what specialised provision or special facilities exist at the school for pupils with SEN. The requirements do not seem overly bureaucratic or burdensome. In addition many of the requirements could be met through the publication of other policies. When teaching and learning policies are published and include

information on the school's approach to the teaching and learning for pupils with SEN, this will cover a significant part of the current school SEN policy requirements.

50. It is a higher priority for me that schools should have a dialogue with parents about their SEN policy than that they meet the detailed requirements on content that have been in place since 1993. We are persuaded that there is greater benefit in reducing the specific requirements of the policy in favour of greater engagement with parents about what should be in the policy.

**(3) I recommend the reduction in the required content of schools' SEN policies.**

51. However, there is information that is essential for parents. They have a right to know, for instance, if their child has been identified as having special educational needs and what this means, both in terms of what they can expect the school to do and what their statutory rights are. They need to know how to complain if things go wrong. They should know what outcomes the school seeks to achieve for disabled children and children with SEN.

52. There is a minimum core of information that should be included in schools' SEN policies:

- Information about the school's policies for the identification, assessment and provision for all pupils with special educational needs;
- Information about outcomes for children with special educational needs;
- How parents can complain about the school's SEN policy or practice;
- Information about the local authority's SEN policy and where that is published;
- Information about parents' statutory rights.

53. This level of information is modest. In addition, some of the requirements can be met by using already published information, for example, information about parents' statutory rights can be met by providing the DCSF parent leaflet on SEN. Some of this information may be covered elsewhere, for example, where a school provides a policy on complaints and this includes complaints about SEN issues, this should serve the purpose.

54. Beyond these requirements, high quality dialogue with parents will help schools to decide what they should include in their policies. Schools should consult with parents on their SEN policy, review it at least every 3 years and revise it as necessary.

55. The policy should be made widely available. The policy should also be published on the local authority's website. There is significant benefit in schools publishing a version of their SEN policy as a leaflet for parents. This leaflet should also be widely available.

56. The DCSF should work with schools and the Social Partnership to determine the best way of supporting them in meeting the streamlined requirements: what would be helpful in terms of supporting guidance or examples of good practice.

57. Special schools and hospital schools are also required to publish details of their policies. There should be an equivalent simplification of the SEN policy requirements on special schools and hospital schools. Because of the high numbers of pupils with SEN in pupil referral units (PRUs), 18,964 out of a total PRU population of 25,288 or 75%:

**(4) I recommend that the requirements on SEN policies are extended to pupil referral units.**

58. Times of transition are particularly stressful for children with SEN and their parents. It is important that parents' information needs should be recognised and considered in regular meetings with parents. In particular:

**(5) I recommend that annual review meetings for children with a statement include a consideration of information needs of parents and children and young people.**

59. The involvement I recommend above in respect of school SEN policies is already a requirement for a disability equality scheme. Schools are already required to involve in the development of the scheme, 'disabled people who appear to them to have an interest in the way they carry out their functions'. In the interests of streamlining the requirements, DCSF should promote their guidance encouraging schools to publish their accessibility plan as part of their disability equality scheme.

60. We were concerned at the level of non-compliance with the requirement to publish a disability equality scheme identified in the MENCAP survey (2008)<sup>22</sup>. Of 40 schools surveyed, only 7 had produced a disability equality scheme and only one of these met the requirements.

61. I recommend, below, that all school disability equality schemes are both made available as currently required and published on the relevant local authority website.

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<sup>22</sup> MENCAP (2008) *Just not a priority: schools and disability equality*

*Local authority information on SEN and disability*

62. The review of SEN information has highlighted the importance of some of the information required of local authorities. In particular, the requirement to publish information on the respective responsibilities of schools and the local authority in making special educational provision is proving critical in relationships between parents and schools and local authorities. The NatCen report (in draft)<sup>23</sup> is clear about the importance of this information in creating clarity for schools and parents. Where this information is not published, or is not clear, it undermines relationships. Where it is published, shared and understood it brings clarity to parents' expectations of schools. This improves working relationships. It is the 'transparency' part of the core offer.

63. Our research report recognises that this information is not straightforward to develop. However, it has a high impact. Schools and parents should be involved in the development of local authority information.

64. My attention has been drawn to a number of local authority disability equality schemes that do not meet the requirements in respect of disabled children and education. I have seen schemes that address housing, democratic services, leisure services well but, in addition, local authorities are required to publish information on the educational opportunities available to and the educational outcomes for disabled children. Again, the MENCAP survey identified a shortfall; they examined the DESs of nine local authorities and found that:

*Only one of these local authority DESs even refers to schools in their area. This local authority does state that it will 'advise and support schools in publishing their DES no later than December 2005'. However, none of the schools sampled in this authority had published a DES eighteen months after this date.<sup>24</sup>*

65. In the development of their scheme, local authorities must meet the same requirements on involvement as schools. Disabled children have a clear interest in the way the local authority carries out its functions and we heard of positive examples where local authorities consulted directly with disabled children.

66. The local authority has both a significant interest in and responsibility for promoting good communication between parents of disabled children and children with special educational needs and schools. It is in their interests to ensure that school SEN policies and disability equality schemes are published and widely available.

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<sup>23</sup> Penfold C, Cleghorn N, Tennant R, Palmer I, Read J (in draft) *Parental Confidence in the Special Educational Needs Assessment, Statementing and Tribunal System: a qualitative study*. National Centre for Social Research for DCSF

<sup>24</sup> MENCAP (2008) *Just not a priority: schools and disability equality*

**(6) I recommend that:**

- **local authorities publish on their website SEN policies and disability equality schemes from all schools in their area;**
- **the National Strategies report to the DCSF on which local authorities have complied with the publication of the required disability equality scheme and SEN information and on the extent of the compliance of schools in the area;**
- **the DCSF should publish the report from the National Strategies.**

67. To support local authorities, the National Strategies should be commissioned to promote examples of good practice in the development and publication of:

- the information required in the 2001 Regulations;
- local authority disability equality schemes, in particular, as they apply to disabled children.

68. Each local authority should bring together the required information on SEN and disability, along with other information for parents on a single local authority website. Parents should be involved in agreeing what is most important, but this might include information on, or links to, the parent partnership service, voluntary organisations that provide support to children and families and links to relevant social care and health services. The site should be readily accessible.

69. The DCSF should work with the LGA and the ADCS to identify the best ways of bringing together this information, for example, where appropriate, this information might be hosted by the Families Information Service.

### **4.3 Making the change**

70. The core offer should be widely promoted amongst all those working with parents of disabled children and children with special educational needs. Its implementation will require a significant cultural shift in the working relationships between schools, local authorities and other services and parents and carers.

71. The DCSF will need to work with the National Strategies, the LGA, ADCS and schools to identify the best way of promoting the core offer amongst schools; and of exemplifying and disseminating good practice in meeting the core offer.

72. In addition, the core offer should be widely promoted through parent

partnership services, parents' groups and parent networks. It should inform developments in the wider mainstream developments in parent engagement.

73. I welcome the fact that training for teachers in working with parents of disabled children and children with SEN is now included as a specific unit in the initial teacher training materials developed by the Training and Development Agency for Schools<sup>25</sup>. The development of the CWDC 'common core of skills and knowledge' should address communication and information needs and wider issues in working with parents and carers of disabled children and children with SEN.

74. This training also needs to be available to those already in service who have regular contact with parents of disabled children and children with SEN, in particular local authority officers working in SEN sections, teachers in their induction, SENCOs in the training being developed for them, and a wide range of professionals who may fulfil the role of lead professional or keyworker.

**(7) I recommend the development of training for working with parents of disabled children and children with SEN across the workforce. This should build on existing materials.**

75. Training for working with parents will be an important element of the new SEN outcomes pilot, Achievement for All. You asked me to keep a watching brief over this pilot. I will work with the leaders of this pilot to ensure that what we know already about training in this area is incorporated into the pilot.

#### **4.4 Accountability**

76. A number of our recommendations, above, should lead to increased compliance with the requirements on the publication of information:

- the publication of school information by local authorities;
- reference to local authority information in school policies;
- National Strategies reporting on levels of compliance by local authorities and by schools in the local authority area.

77. However, I want more than compliance: I want a change in the approach to working with parents; and there needs to be increased quality assurance on policies and practices in relation to disabled pupils and pupils with SEN.

78. At the level of the local authority, we believe that changes in the culture of working with parents can be picked up through the new National Indicator, NI54. The indicator provides feedback on how education fares in respect of the different functions measured through the indicator:

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<sup>25</sup> TDA and DCSF (2008) *Working in partnership with parents/carers*

- information and transparency;
- assessment;
- participation and feedback.

79. At a school level, schools should have to declare that they have published required information.

**(8) I recommend that school self-evaluation should be explicit about compliance with the statutory requirements on SEN and disability.**

80. Ofsted focuses on outcomes achieved by pupils. Where outcomes are not good enough for disabled pupils and pupils with SEN, schools should not be able to get a 'good' or 'outstanding' judgment overall.

**(9) I recommend that the judgements on the outcomes for disabled pupils and pupils with SEN are always considered in a limiting judgment for overall school effectiveness.**

81. Where outcomes are not good, Ofsted looks in more detail at underlying issues in the school. To inform Ofsted's more detailed examination of schools,

**(10) I recommend that Ofsted's parent questionnaire includes questions for parents of disabled pupils and pupils with SEN about access to information, about provision for their child and about outcomes.**

82. School improvement partners support schools in their evaluation and report to school governing bodies, the head teacher and the local authority. National information on the progress of and outcomes for children with SEN who are working below age-related expectations is becoming available this year. All SIPs working with mainstream schools should receive training focused on SEN and disability and there should be an increased focus on outcomes for disabled pupils and pupils with SEN in SIP reporting.

**(11) I recommend that:**

- **all SIPs working with mainstream schools receive training in SEN and disability;**
- **in reporting to the school governing body, the head teacher and the local authority, school improvement partners report on the extent to which the school has promoted good outcomes and good progress for disabled pupils and pupils with SEN.**

## Appendix 1: Recommendations

1. I recommend that the principles of the core offer developed through Aiming High for Disabled Children are extended to provide a framework for engagement by schools and children's services with parents of children with special educational needs.
2. I recommend that current policy developments in parent engagement should take full account of disabled children and children with SEN.
3. I recommend the reduction in the required content of schools' SEN policies.
4. I recommend that the requirements on SEN policies are extended to pupil referral units.
5. I recommend that annual review meetings for children with a statement include a consideration of information needs of parents and children and young people.
6. I recommend that:
  - local authorities publish on their website SEN policies and disability equality schemes from all schools in their area;
  - the National Strategies report to the DCSF on which local authorities have complied with the publication of the required disability equality scheme and SEN information and on the extent of the compliance of schools in the area;
  - the DCSF should publish the report from the National Strategies.
7. I recommend the development of training for working with parents of disabled children and children with SEN across the workforce. This should build on existing materials.
8. I recommend that school self-evaluation should be explicit about compliance with the statutory requirements on SEN and disability.
9. I recommend that the judgements on the outcomes for disabled pupils and pupils with SEN are always considered in a limiting judgment for overall school effectiveness.
10. I recommend that Ofsted's parent questionnaire includes questions for parents of disabled pupils and pupils with SEN about access to information, about provision for their child and about outcomes.
11. I recommend that:
  - all SIPs working with mainstream schools should receive training in SEN and disability;
  - in reporting to the school governing body, the head teacher and the local authority, school improvement partners report on the extent to which the school has promoted good outcomes and good progress for disabled pupils and pupils with SEN.