

‘Too Little, Too Late’: Monitoring Report

31 January 2023

1.0 Introduction

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was established under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NI) Order 2003 (the Order) with a principal aim *‘to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people in Northern Ireland (NI)’*. In exercising her functions, the Commissioner must have regard to all provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

In March 2020, NICCY published a ‘Rights Based Review of Special Educational Needs Provision in Mainstream Schools’ - **‘Too Little, Too late’**¹(TLTL). This report was produced in accordance with the powers and functions set out in the NICCY Order. This includes duties to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services provided for children and young people by relevant authorities; to advise Government and relevant authorities; and to encourage children and young people and their parents / carers to communicate with the Commissioner.

The Review identified a range of barriers preventing children with SEND from fully experiencing their right to an effective education, including:

- Insufficient, poor quality and inadequately resourced services and support provision;
- A lack of early identification and assessment of need and delays in the statutory assessment and statementing process;
- Poor communication, engagement with and involvement of children and young people, their parents or carers, and other key stakeholders, by relevant authorities; and

¹ [niccy-too-little-too-late-report-march-2020-web-final.pdf](#)

- Poor coordination and communication between education and health concerning identification, diagnosis, assessment and implementation of support.

NICCY made 40 recommendations, across 12 thematic areas (table 1), aimed at addressing identified weaknesses in the SEND system and ensuring the delivery of a more responsive and effective support system.

Table 1: ‘Too Little, Too Late’ Review, Thematic Areas for Recommendations

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|---|---|
| 1. Accessibility, Availability and Effectiveness of Statutory Supports and Services | 7. Transparency of the SEN Process |
| 2. Capacity Building in Schools | 8. Communication and Engagement |
| 3. Strategic Planning for Behavioural Support Services | 9. Involvement of Children and Young People |
| 4. Suspensions, Expulsions and Informal Exclusions | 10. Multi-Disciplinary Working |
| 5. The Role of the Educational Psychology Service | 11. DARS and Appeals |
| 6. Statutory Assessment and Statementing | 12. Systemic Review |

Implementation of TLTL recommendations

TLTL and other reviews, including those undertaken by the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and Department of Education (DE) and EA’s own internal audit of practice, clearly established that fundamental reform of the SEN system is required to ensure every child experiences their right to education, without discrimination.^{2 3} Work to address the implementation of NICCY’s TLTL recommendations and these other reviews is overseen by the SEND Transformation Programme (SEND TP),⁴ through 13 ‘first wave’ projects, led by DE and EA, all of which have now been initiated.⁵ The SEND

² Northern Ireland Audit Office (2020) *Impact Review of Special Educational Needs*; Public Accounts Committee (2021) *Report on Impact Review of Special Educational Needs*; Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (2021) *Call for Change – Time for Action*, and the Department of Education’s *SEN Learner Journey Project*

³ The Independent Review of SEN, which NICCY understands is drafted and will be published imminently, will add to the existing evidence base.

⁴ Formerly named the SEND Strategic Development Programme (SEND SDP)

⁵ See appendix 1

TP, which is chaired by the EA's Chief Executive and includes representation from a broad range of agencies,⁶ also oversees implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (SEND Act).⁷ NICCY's Chief Executive sits on the SEND TP Board in an advisory capacity, in line with NICCY's remit.

The remainder of this report contains a thematic analysis of the government's response to the *TLTL* recommendations and the work undertaken so far to address these. A separate Monitoring Table has been published which includes NICCY's comments on actions taken by Relevant Authorities to address each of the TLTL 40 recommendations.⁸

3.0 NICCY's assessment of progress on the implementation of *Too Little Too Late* recommendations

NICCY welcomes the progress update received from the DE and the EA in November 2022, providing details of actions, either planned or already taken by relevant authorities, to address the *TLTL* recommendations. Our assessment of progress draws on the information contained in that progress update, as well as reflections made by relevant authorities (RAs) at a roundtable event held by NICCY on 29 November 2022, and discussions with RAs at periodic meetings held over the past 10 months.⁹

Less than 12 months have passed since NICCY's first *TLTL* Monitoring Report was published in March 2022 giving our analysis of progress on each of the 40 recommendations. In order to avoid repeating many of the comments made in our first report, the following sections focus on what we consider as ongoing key issues of concern and positive developments since then, organised within the following clustered themes:

1. Provision of Supports and Services;
2. Identification and Assessment of Need;
3. Monitoring and Evaluation;
4. Capacity Building;

⁶ The SDP Board includes representation from the DE, DoH, ETI, CCMS, Public Health Agency, Allied Health Professionals and Trade Unions.

⁷ Remaining sections of the SEND Act (NI) 2016 will be implemented on a phased basis following enactment of the SEN Regulations, which requires a functioning NI Assembly.

⁸ [Monitoring Table 2023 : Action planned or taken by relevant agencies to address 'Too Little, Too Late' \(2020\) recommendations](#)

⁹ Appendix 2 lists organisations represented at the roundtable.

5. Communication and Involvement; and
6. SEND Act Implementation.

Several of the identified issues are relevant to more than one clustered theme but are addressed within a single theme to avoid repetition.

3.1 Provision of Supports and Services

TLTL identified serious deficiencies relating to the quantity, quality, accessibility and effectiveness of supports and services at all stages of the SEN process. In response, NICCY made a range of recommendations aimed at improving school-based, early years and statutory supports and services provision, to ensure they are responsive, evidence-based, appropriately resourced and tailored towards children's needs.

Overall, NICCY considers that fledging progress has been made to address our recommendations related to provision of supports and services. Many of the concerns and issues highlighted in our first TLTL Monitoring report continue to be highly relevant. While we acknowledge and welcome the breadth of work that is either planned or already underway through SEND TP projects, in general, we consider that the pace of progress is too slow.

A positive development is that the following four EA led projects, which were delayed by funding constraints at the time of monitoring in 2022, have now been initiated:

- Review of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) model;
- Review of Early Years (EY) SEND supports
- Review and Integration of EA's SEND Pupil Support Services; and,
- Consolidation of the Employment Model for Classroom Assistants.

NICCY considers the work that will be undertaken through these projects to be integral to the reform required to ensure high quality SEN services and supports are available at the right time, in the right place, to all children who need them. We note a similar approach will be taken to progress each project, involving baseline research, comparator analysis and stakeholder engagement across 2022/2023, followed by piloting of models in 2023/24 and full-roll out in 2024/25. NICCY recognises that adequate time must be taken to ensure that the work involved in the projects can be accomplished in a rigorous and meaningful way. However, we are concerned that timeframes, referred to in the Update, indicate it could take several years or more until high quality, tailored services and supports are available to meet

the needs of all children with SEN. **As stated in our first monitoring report, it is essential that interim measures are put in place as a priority to ensure children are provided with the requisite support as we await full roll-out of the projects.** Measures should be informed by the findings of the Unmet Need study.

Further issues of concern are highlighted below.

Gaps in services

The four EA led projects referenced above will consider gaps in existing services, and, in particular, the Review and Integration of EA's SEND Pupil Support Services, will involve review of the EA's literacy service and the lack of numeracy support services. While we welcome that these projects have now commenced, NICCY is disappointed at the distinct lack of progress in providing numeracy support services for children with dyscalculia. **We reiterate that persistent gaps in the provision of numeracy services must be explicitly and comprehensively addressed as a matter of urgency.**

NICCY is also concerned that pupils with SEN in Irish Medium Schools face particular challenges due to insufficient statutory supports tailored to their needs. Over 20% of pupils in the IME sector have SEN, yet provision, including pupil support services, is currently focused on the English-medium sector and does not take account of the bespoke needs of Irish-medium pupils learning in the immersion context.¹⁰ **It is essential that the EA led projects reviewing gaps in services include systemic review of supports and services specifically tailored to the needs of the IME sector.** This should include review of availability of appropriate diagnostic tools, gaps in tailored supports and services, and training required to ensure the specific needs of IME pupils with SEN are met effectively.

Early intervention

TLTL identified a lack of early identification and intervention as a profound shortcoming of the current SEN system. Early intervention is fundamental to achieving good outcomes for children with SEN and towards mitigating against increasing complexity of need because those needs have not been identified or addressed at the earliest opportunity. While requiring initial investment, early intervention is also a more cost-effective way to meet children's needs over the medium to long-term. This was recognised within the 'Fair Start' Action Plan, which acknowledged the benefits of early intervention for children with SEN and

¹⁰ [Irish-Medium-Education-and-the-Statutory-Duty.pdf \(caj.org.uk\)](https://caj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Irish-Medium-Education-and-the-Statutory-Duty.pdf)

recommended investment in early years as a priority area.¹¹ It is critical that early intervention work, which we consider as fundamental to enabling children with SEN to fulfil their potential, does not become a casualty of current budgetary pressures. While we are very encouraged that early intervention will be a focus of EA's EPS, Pupil Support Services and Early Years SEN Supports Reviews, **we are concerned about the timeframe involved in fully implementing the outcomes of these Reviews and call for sustained investment in early intervention as an urgent priority.**

Pupil Support Services

TLTL recommended that the EA should make explicit the criteria to access Stage 3 services, complemented by a comprehensive awareness raising programme for schools, EPs and other health and education professionals to ensure awareness of the referral criteria for each service. While we acknowledge that resource constraints currently limit the overall number of children who can access EA's Pupil Support Services at any given time, we consider that the ongoing lack of clear criteria to access these services is wholly unacceptable. **Clear criteria to access Stage 3 services are urgently required to ensure transparency, consistency and accountability of decision making.**

Behaviour Support Services

NICCY is encouraged that some progress has been made to provide further support to schools in this area. This includes eighteen Social, Behavioural and Emotional Wellbeing (SBEW) Early Intervention Officers who provide support within primary and post primary schools, with further expansion planned over the coming months. We also note the introduction of a Post Primary SBEW Hub pilot, in three Post Primary Schools, as an early intervention and prevention approach within schools. NICCY welcomes this pilot and calls for wider implementation, both geographically and in a more sustained way, following completion and evaluation of the pilot.

SEN provision for children being educated outside of school

TLTL recommended that the EA should work constructively with parents/carers to ensure that all children with SEN being educated outside of school are provided with the specialist SEN services required. We know that over the last 5 years, the number of children in Northern Ireland being home-schooled has risen by almost 180%. Although the Education Authority does not collate data on the reasons for

¹¹ A Fair Start (education-ni.gov.uk), recommendation 1.1.

pupil de-registration,¹² anecdotal evidence and research in other contexts have identified parental concerns about unmet SEN needs as a factor.¹³ We do not consider that the Update provides reassurance that the EA are proactively engaging with parents in this respect. **NICCY strongly recommends that a proactive approach is taken to ensure that children being educated at home are provided with the requisite services and supports.**

Multi-disciplinary working

In the period since our Review was published, enhanced collaboration between education and health has become even more critical due to the impact of resource related and other challenges within our health and education systems. For example, it is very concerning that, between 2021 and 2022, the number of children waiting for an autism assessment has increased by 33 % (n=1690).¹⁴ Data shows that a high proportion of children diagnosed with autism have special educational needs - 83% of school aged children diagnosed with autism in 2021/22 have SEN – but without a formal diagnosis, some children will be unable to access the educational supports and services they need.¹⁵

NICCY welcomes the positive direction of travel, including a range of actions taken to improve collaboration and co-operation between education and health, many of which were specifically referenced in our first monitoring report. Since then, we welcome that the DE/DoH SEN Steering Group has initiated a Review of multi-disciplinary working in partnership with the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) and that a draft MOU has been developed by DE and is currently being considered by DoH. **NICCY considers it crucial that the impact of enhanced collaboration and co-ordination between education and health is closely monitored and evaluated.**

The Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (CSCA) places a duty on relevant authorities to co-operate in the planning, commissioning and delivery of children’s services. Section 4 of the SEND Act expands on this, setting out the specific ways in which health and education must co-operate in respect of identifying, assessing and providing services to children with SEN. **NICCY calls for**

¹² [Questions Search Results \(niassembly.gov.uk\)](#)

¹³ E.g. see Kendall, L. and Taylor, E., 2016. ‘We can’t make him fit into the system’: parental reflections on the reasons why home education is the only option for their child who has special educational needs. *Education 3-13*, 44(3), pp.297-310.

¹⁴ Data provided by DoH/HSCNI Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG)

¹⁵ [The Prevalence of Autism \(including Asperger’s Syndrome\) in School Age Children in Northern Ireland 2022 \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Section 4 of the SEND Act to be enacted as soon as is practicably possible.

Transitions Planning

It is vital that specialised supports and services are in place to support the smooth transitioning processes of young people with SEN from education into adult life/services. Effective transition planning for young people with SEN is crucial across a range of areas but we are particularly concerned by recent labour market statistics which show that the pandemic had significant impacts on young people with disabilities in NI, showing their employment rate dropping to the lowest on record.¹⁶ The rate for young people with disabilities in NI who are not in education, employment or training is also among the highest across all UK regions.¹⁷ We understand that work in this area is linked to DE's and DfE's '14-19 Framework' to transform education and training provision. However, this framework contains only one action related to SEN which is narrowly focused on post-16 and post-19 opportunities for YP with SEN in special schools.¹⁸

We are disappointed that the joint DE/DoH Transitions project is no longer going ahead as originally planned due to limited resources. We note the establishment of a cross-Departmental Transitions Working group and that DE/DoH are exploring how the transitions process may be applied to pupils with SEN who do not have a 'Statement'. While these actions are welcome, we consider that greater progress could have been made in transition planning. **NICCY strongly recommends that targeted support for transitions is provided to all young people with SEND, including those who are educated in mainstream schools.**

3.2 Identification and assessment of need

TLTL identified use of the time allocation model and poor co-ordination and communication between education and health, as predominant barriers to identification, assessment and implementation of support services.

Recommendations focused on a range of areas, including provision of training, funding and guidance for assessment tools, identification of unmet need, improving transparency of the SEN process and multi-disciplinary working.

¹⁶ ['Maximising potential: A review of labour market outcomes for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland'](#) (2022) Ulster University Economic Policy Centre, p.29

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ [Developing A More Strategic Approach to 14-19 Education and Training. A Framework to Transform 14-19 Education and Training Provision. \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](#) p.34

Compliance with statutory time limits

NICCY has ongoing concerns that the system is not sufficiently prepared to consistently meet the forthcoming 22-week statutory time limit under the new SEND framework. Despite a range of positive actions to date, including recruitment, enhanced monitoring, gradual roll-out of AnyComms+ within Health Trusts, and EA's enhanced collaboration with PHA, monitoring data show that the number of cases open outside the statutory assessment timeframe of 26 weeks has been steadily rising each month since February 2022.¹⁹

Unmet Need

Understanding the scale and scope of unmet need in schools is essential to inform planning for service provision, resource allocation and to improve children's outcomes. We note that the unmet need study, originally planned for the end of the 2021/22 academic year, is complete but not yet published. NICCY welcomes that the study will establish a robust quantitative and qualitative picture of current unmet need²⁰ across NI and will allow more robust modelling of future service options. **We consider it critical that the EA Plan contains specific actions to address the established unmet need and ensure children are not waiting excessive time periods for additional supports through Stage 3 services, as is currently the case.**

NICCY is encouraged that the EA led reviews will include full review and reform of the current time allocation model, so that the needs of all children suspected to have SEN are assessed at the earliest opportunity, and will consider options to use school-based assessment to inform access to pupil support services. **It is imperative that any reform is matched by additional and targeted funding to ensure pupil support services are sufficiently resourced to meet demand and are made available at the earliest stage possible.**

NICCY has significant ongoing concerns about the acceptance/use of private assessments from parents by EA. We have been informed by DE that, in accordance with the 1996 Order, a parent has a right to make representations and submit written evidence, which may include a private report from an Educational Psychologist, to support their case in securing special education provision for their child. However, EA will seek to ensure that professional private psychological reports cannot be used

¹⁹ Statutory Assessment Performance Report 18.3

²⁰ Relating to Stage 3 assessment

instead of advice provided by an EP employed or engaged by the EA. NICCY is very disappointed that a more robust approach has not been taken. **To ensure equality in all circumstances, the EA must make it clear that consideration of private EP assessments must not cause inequality of access to assessment and services. Private assessment must never replace statutory assessments as required. NICCY strongly recommends that records clearly reference if/when consideration of private EP assessments may have been a factor and ensure no disparity of treatment and/or provision.**

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Suspensions and expulsions

TLTL identified the need for robust data to identify causes of the variance in rates of suspension and expulsion between children with and without SEN, and to ensure that children being educated outside of school are provided with specialist SEN services.

We are disappointed that limited progress has been made in response to our recommendations in this area. While we acknowledge that a Review of Suspensions and Expulsions has been undertaken, details on the scope of this review, and specifically whether this examines informal/unregulated exclusions, have not yet been clarified, making it difficult to assess progress. Furthermore, we are disappointed that the Review has not yet been published, despite previous notification that a report would be submitted to the Minister by March 2022. There is also no clear evidence contained within the Update received, that Boards of Governors understand their responsibilities with regard to ensuring that schools have taken all appropriate pastoral measures before suspension, expulsion or informal exclusion has been considered. **Greater clarity must be provided in respect of the recording and monitoring of potentially unlawful informal or unregulated exclusions. We also expect the Review to build on the findings of *TLTL* and to set out a series of actions aligned to its recommendations.**

Monitoring and evaluation of SEND transformation work

With regard to wider monitoring, it is imperative that robust mechanisms are put in place to evaluate the impact of activities being undertaken as part of SEND TP projects. NICCY recognises that, in some cases, there may be a time lag between implementation and impact, and therefore clear identifiable results may not be

immediately evident. **However, details of how and when evaluation will be undertaken, and of specific plans to develop quantitative and qualitative indicators and baselines against which the impact of projects will be assessed are necessary.**

3.4 Capacity Building

TLTL made a number of recommendations focused on ensuring that all school staff are trained, guided, supported and assessed on their ability to meet the diverse needs of pupils with SEN and disabilities in mainstream schools. It is our overall assessment that actions taken so far to build schools' capacity are insufficient.

Training and development

NICCY welcomes steps taken so far to ensure all school staff are trained, supported and assessed on their ability to meet diverse needs of pupils with SEN and disabilities in mainstream schools. These include Personal Learning Plan training for school staff, the appointment of a lead for EA's SEN Advice and Information Service, and continued work with Teacher Training Colleges by EA's SEND implementation team. However, it is not evident from the monitoring update that action has been taken to implement a mandatory programme of early (EPD) and continuous professional development (CPD) for all relevant school staff in identifying, providing for, and ensuring full and equal inclusion of children with SEN. NICCY considers this imperative and calls for its introduction, by EA and teacher training institutions, without further delay.

Guidance on the identification of SEN amongst newcomer children

Newcomer pupils now comprise 5% of NI's school population and DE statistics for 2021/22 show that 17% of these pupils (n=2943) have special educational needs (13% Stage 1 – 2 and 4% Statemented).²¹ While we welcome the positive actions that have been taken in the area of newcomer pupil support, we consider that much of this is not adequately SEN focused. **NICCY calls for specific guidance on the identification and assessment of SEN amongst newcomer children to be provided to teaching staff without further delay.**

²¹ [Newcomer Pupils 202122.pdf \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Fostering an inclusive culture

TLTL recommended that school leaders, including Boards of Governors and Principals, must be supported to foster an inclusive culture and ethos, founded on equality. It is very disappointing that there is no clear evidence of actions taken to address this recommendation. Furthermore, we are concerned about anecdotal evidence indicating a lack of consistency in inclusive education practices across mainstream schools, including a shift towards increased segregation of children with SEN in some mainstream settings. **We note from the Update that further discussion with DE is needed to clarify the definition of ‘inclusive education and ethos’ and urge that work in this area is undertaken as a priority.**

3.5 Communication, Engagement and Involvement

TLTL identified a lack of clear information for parents/carers and other stakeholders from both the EA and schools at different stages of the SEN process. The need for provision of greater opportunities for children and young people’s involvement in the SEN process was also identified. Since *TLTL*’s publication, other sources, including the DE’s Landscape Review of the Education Authority, have identified EA’s communication and engagement with stakeholders as an area in need of improvement.²²

NICCY welcomes the range of positive actions that have been taken by EA in this area. These include extensive direct engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, development of resources, establishment of a new contact model for parents by SARS, and the implementation of a range of consultation mechanisms, with further plans for parental involvement as projects evolve over the coming months. We also note that a SEN reference group has been set up, and as part of this group’s activities, the EA have been consulting with parents on how to engage with them more effectively. NICCY considers meaningful engagement with parents and other stakeholders critical, particularly in the current context of growing concerns about budget cuts and potential impacts on the provision of SEN services. The views of parents, children and young people must be reflected in policy and practices, and integral to evaluation processes.

We are encouraged by EA’s commitment to making improvements in this area and call for ongoing review of the effectiveness of the actions taken to date to improve communication, engagement and involvement with stakeholders.

²² [DE. Education Authority Landscape Review June 2022.pdf \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

3.6 SEND Act Implementation

Notwithstanding the absence of an Executive and Assembly, NICCY is disappointed at the slow pace of progress involved in implementing the SEN Framework, which we understand is being undertaken as a phased process. The protracted timeframe involved in commencing the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the SEND Act) provisions, the new Regulations and new Code of Practice (CoP), continues to exacerbate pressures on the SEN system and delay the full implementation of NICCY's TLTL recommendations.

NICCY has continued to engage with DE on the proposed content of the draft SEN Regulations and CoP, and met with DE in August 2022 to discuss specific concerns related to the following issues.

Removal of draft Regulation nine (relating to information to be sought by the Authority when considering whether to make an assessment): NICCY is very concerned that Regulation nine will be removed in its entirety. We have been informed by DE that EA typically seek relevant information, and that DE are confident this will be integral to the process. NICCY calls for a more rigorous process to ensure confidence and consistency in the approach taken.

Mediation arrangements: DE have informed NICCY of their intention to extend the two-month time limit, which currently applies to filing an appeal to SENDIST, to three months. NICCY understands the rationale for this but is concerned that this could adversely impact children in terms of timeframes to access education and appropriate support services.

Determination of Capacity (DoC): DE have informed NICCY that EA employed Educational Psychologists (EPs) will be responsible for undertaking determination of capacity assessments. Given that capacity of individuals may change over time, we consider it essential that capacity is reviewed on a regular basis.

Appointment of Alternative Person (post 16s): In the case of a child who it is determined lacks capacity, it is very concerning that DE are considering removal of the option to appoint an alternative person. NICCY considers it vital that the Regulations facilitate the appointment of an independent person or advocate to protect the autonomy of the child and provide necessary assistance and support.

Education and Health content in the Statement: NICCY strongly considers that health provision must be a mandatory requirement and as such included within Part 3 of the Statement.

Private Educational Psychology Assessments: As stated at page nine, NICCY considers that private assessments – including those undertaken by educational psychologists who are employed by the EA - must not cause inequality of access to assessment and services. As a minimum, records should clearly reference if/when private EP assessments have been submitted as evidence.

It is critical that these issues, and those detailed in NICCY's previous written submissions to DE, are fully addressed with least possible delay to ensure that the SEN Framework can effectively meet the needs of children and young people with SEN and suspected SEN and/or disabilities. **NICCY strongly recommends that implementation of the SEND framework, including the Regulations and Code of Practice, is commenced as soon as practicably possible.**

4.0 Conclusion

Almost 36 months have passed since the publication of NICCY's *TLTL* Report and recommendations. NICCY welcomes the breadth of work that has been undertaken over that time, through the SEND transformation programme and by relevant authorities, to progress delivery of our recommendations and wider transformation of the SEND system. As stated earlier, this involves a wide range of actions being taken forward by SEND TP projects, some of which are still at an early stage due to funding related delays. NICCY acknowledges the commitment and co-ordinated response shown by relevant authorities thus far and considers the direction of travel as generally positive. However, notwithstanding the absence of a NI Executive and Assembly, we are disappointed at the slow pace of progress evident across several of the thematic areas discussed in this report, including implementation of the SEND Act. NICCY considers it imperative that interim measures are put in place as a matter of urgency, to address unmet need now. **We will continue to monitor progress in line with our legislative remit, including addressing complaints as they are received into our legal department.**

NICCY is also increasingly concerned about the potentially adverse impacts of recent budget cuts on both planned transformation work and the existing SEN system which is already unable to meet demand. Furthermore, the strong link

between poverty and SEND means that the demand for SEN services will likely be exacerbated in the forthcoming period, as cost of living pressures push more families into poverty. The urgent need for provision of sustainable and long-term financial investment by government in the SEND system has therefore never been more evident. Therefore, NICCY is deeply concerned by recent decisions made concerning the NI Budget, specifically the budget allocated to Education.

In the current absence of a NI Executive, NICCY strongly urges the Secretary of State for NI to prioritise the funding needed to address longstanding systemic issues and ensure the sustainable delivery of services needed for all children with SEND so that their right to effective education is realised, enabling them to reach their full potential.

SEND SDP Projects

EA led projects

Statutory Assessment Improvement Project

Integrated Multi-Disciplinary Model for Pupil Support

Educational Psychology Service Model Review

Review of SEN-Related Workload

Review of Early Years SEN Supports

Review of Employment Model for SEN Classroom Assistants

SEN Placement Project

Special Education Strategic Area Plan 2022 - 27

DE led projects

Implementation of the SEND Act (NI) 2016

Review of Suspensions, Expulsions and Informal Exclusions

Review of Multi-Disciplinary Working

ETI Evaluation of SEN Provision in Mainstream Schools

DE/DoH Transitions Working Group

**Too Little Too Late' (TLTL) SEN Review Roundtable:
Monitoring Implementation of Recommendations
29 November 2022**

Representatives from the following organisations were in attendance:

- Department of Education
- Department of Health
- Education Authority
- Education and Training Inspectorate; and
- Health and Social Care Board;
- Public Health Agency
- Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
- Strategic Planning and Performance Group