



INCLUSION IRELAND

**A Submission to the National Council for Special
Education: NCSE Research framework, March 2015.**

This document is in font 14 Verdana in line with Inclusion
Ireland Plain English guidelines.

Introduction

Inclusion Ireland is the national organisation for people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Ireland. Our core focus is on the realisation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Part of Inclusion Irelands work is to work with local disability family support groups through the 'Connect Family Network'. We regularly consult with 140 local family groups that support people with a disability. This work is done with the support of Irish Autism Action and Down Syndrome Ireland.

A core aim of this work is to allow the voice of families who experience disability services to have a voice into policy development. This includes the research or consultative processes which inform policy.

Inclusion Ireland suggests the following research themes. This has been informed by families who have a person with a disability in the Irish education system.

Theme 1

Proposal 1: A survey and review/analysis of parent and/or student experiences of special education services, measured at the key transition points in the education journey.

Transitions are stressful in life at any time. This is even more so for parents and young people with special education needs

in the transition phases of their school journey. The experience of families and students may help inform more user friendly procedures going forward.

Proposal 2: Parent experience of accessing a school place for their child with special education needs.

The NCSE note the soft barriers that many schools place in the way of a child with special education needs enrolling¹. There are also many enrolment policies that are exclusionary in nature and may demand multiple assessments from a parent. Parents have informed Inclusion Ireland that it can be a battle to get their child into a school at any level.

Theme 2

Proposal 1: An analysis of the effectiveness of individual education planning.

This should focus on the outputs for children. Considerations would be: detail in the plan, input from other professionals, achievement of goals, is there a plan in place, the collaboration process with the pupil or parent.

Proposal 2: Research to examine alternative practical support options and strategies for students with ASD attending mainstream schools.

¹ Supporting children with special education needs in schools, NCSE 2013.

For students with ASD being in the mainstream classroom has many benefits including socialisation. However, other difficulties can arise. Sensory, planning and processing difficulties, difficulty coping with change or social engagement, anxiety or lack of social awareness can result in difficulties including behavioural problems that result in the individual being marginalised.

Practical options that research may explore could include:

- the provision of a mentor
- access to quiet space
- adapted curriculum to accommodate strengths
- independence promotion among students with ASD
- whole school awareness that may promote peer support; such as offered by As I Am².

Theme 3

Proposal 1: An analysis of the training needs of teachers in special education.

Research for the National Parent and Sibling Alliance³ noted that there are great deficits in teacher training around special education. Research should examine the training level of current teachers, the effectiveness of undergraduate training

² www.asiam.ie

³ Ready for SEN? Special education needs teacher training in Ireland, National Parents and Siblings Alliance, 2013.

(in SEN) and the take up of continuing professional development courses in special education.

What are the 'special education' training needs of teachers?

Proposal 2: A literature review of speech and language therapy (SLT) as an 'in school intervention'.

A Dublin Institute of Technology analysis of SLT at preschool found the SLT was highly effective when delivered in the preschool setting⁴. There were better outcomes for children when services were delivered in this manner. Many educators see SLT as an 'education enabler'.

Proposal 3: An analysis of the training needs of educators in positive behaviour interventions and crisis management.

Positive behaviour strategies are an effective means of working with young people with a disability. This can help to keep challenging behaviour to a minimum.

On the rare occasions when positive behaviour strategies fail, educators need training in crisis management procedures. Many serious incidents begin as minor issues and can be defused early with appropriate training.

There is little knowledge of levels of training in positive behaviour strategies or behaviour management by staff in

⁴ Nóirín Hayes, Siobhán Keegan and Eimear Goulding (2012) Evaluation of the Speech and Language Therapy Service of Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative, Centre for Social and Educational Research, Dublin Institute of Technology.

Ireland. This analysis must include SNA staff, as many find themselves faced with behaviour that challenges.⁵

⁵ IMPACT survey notes 60% of SNA's have been subject to assault in work.