

March 2019

Gap Analysis - The availability of specialist sensory impairment support services to support mainstream teachers and ancillary staff

Authors: *Brian Lamb*

Date: *March 2019*

Version: *NatSIP report v4*

Status: *Published NatSIP September 2019*

Preface



Contact:

Lindsey Jane Rousseau, NatSIP Facilitator

T: 07711 030711

E: lindsey.rousseau@natsip.org.uk

W: www.natsip.org.uk

Table of Contents

1.	The context for SI CPD	5
1.1	Context.....	5
1.2	Background	5
1.3	The Importance of continuing CPD and teacher support	5
1.4	Schools and CPD general expenditure	6
1.5	Funding for CPD related to sensory impairment in schools	8
1.6	Traded service model of training support	9
1.7	The challenge of low incidence in providing CPD for SI.....	10
1.8	Access to support and advice on SI technology.....	10
1.9	The organisation of specialist support and CPD	11
1.10	Models of Training	12
2	The survey on SI CPD	13
2.1	The Survey.....	13
2.2	SI Professionals; Provision of Training	13
2.3	School based survey.....	22
3.	Implications of the Gap Analysis.....	33
3.1	Overall Implications	33
3.2	How to address this Gap?	34
3.3	The market for CPD for SI and accountability issues	35
3.4	Wider CPD issues for the SI and SEND workforce.....	36
	Appendix 2. Other sources.....	38

0. Glossary

Abbreviation	Definition
BATOD	British Association of Teachers of the Deaf
CPD	Continuing professional development
CSW(s)	Communication Support Worker(s)
CYP	Children and young people, child or young person
DSG	Delegated Schools Grant
HI	Hearing impairment
HNB	High Needs Block of the Delegated Schools Grant
LA(s)	Local Authority/(Authorities)
LISEND	Low-incidence special educational need and disability
MAT(s)	Multi-Academy Trust(s)
MSI	Multi-sensory impairment
NASENCO	The National Award for SEN Co-ordination - a statutory requirement for all SENCOs appointed new to the role from September 2008
QTMSI(s)	(Qualified) Teacher(s) of children with Multi-Sensory Impairment
QToD(s)	(Qualified) teacher(s) of the Deaf
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
QTSI(s)	Qualified Teacher(s) of children with Sensory Impairment
QTVI(s)	(Qualified) Teacher(s) of children with Vision Impairment
SEN	Special Educational Need(s)
SENCO(s)	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator(s)
SEND	Special educational need(s) and disability
SI	Sensory impairment
TA(s)	Teaching Assistant(s)
TSST	Teacher Subject Specialist Training
UCL	University College, London
VI	Vision impairment
VIEW	The professional association for the Vision Impairment Education Workforce

1. The context for SI CPD

1.1 Context

The UCL Gap Analysis has outlined a potential discrepancy between the perceptions of sensory impairment professionals, who feel that that training and support is available for frontline staff on SI, and the perceptions of frontline staff who feel that such support is difficult to access.¹

NatSIP was commissioned by DfE to explore in more detail the context and provision of additional SI continuing professional development, and support for the schools workforce to better understand what CPD support is available and how it was being used.

1.2 Background

In looking at the provision of CPD and support for schools around SI, it is important to put this in the context of the overall schools 'market' for CPD generally and SEND in particular. Overall, schools are expected to fund the CPD needs of their teachers from their own delegated funds. Some LAs continue to supplement some training and support additionally in respect of SEND generally. For SI, LAs fund sensory impairment support services which provide support for schools and other settings from the specialist teacher force and associated specialist staff. These SI services have provided different levels of one-to-one and wider CPD support to schools as part of their role. This has been a long standing response to the very low incidence nature of SI and until now has been accepted as the most cost effective way of providing specialist support to a low incidence group of children with SI. LAs have tended to fund this support out of the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Delegated Schools Grant (DSG).

Schools also receive delegated SEN funds to specifically support the needs of children with SEN and are expected to provide the equivalent of the first £6,000 of additional support per pupil per year (from the SEN notional budget). Potentially, some of this money is also available to support additional CPD needs relating to children and young people (CYP) with SEND. However, this money is not ring-fenced and varies between schools and across different LAs. Larger multi-academy trusts (MATs) also have their own arrangements for training and supporting staff across the MAT. The landscape of funding for SEND CPD is thus hugely affected by the support provided by the LA, the overall resources within schools, awareness and understanding of their CPD needs and the availability of training opportunities.

1.3 The Importance of continuing CPD and teacher support

There is significant research evidence to support the effectiveness and need for ongoing training and support for teachers in addressing children's SEND needs. For example Ekins argues that teachers need *'successful training and continuing professional development to help all teachers to*

¹ A Study of the Drivers, Demand and Supply for Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)- Related Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for School Staff May 2019. Dr Karl Wall, Dr Jo Van Herwegen, Aimee Shaw, Dr Anthony Russell, Dr Amelia Roberts. Whole Schools SEND, UCL, Nasen.

feel more confident in meeting the needs of all children with SEN' (p. 246).² Robinson (2017) recommends that field experiences alone are not sufficient to enable teachers to teach inclusively, rather that; *'pedagogic frameworks for inclusive teacher education must be underpinned with support for intellectual engagement and critical thought'* (p. 175).³ Further, there is a strong stress in the literature on supporting CPD, which focuses on *'developing their knowledge of laws and policy pertaining to SEN and disability, and provide meaningful experiences of teaching learners with SEN may increase levels of self-efficacy within the profession'* (p. 246).⁴ Robinson (2017) also advocates for the promotion of experts through *'career long research orientation'* and *'a collaborative approach to professional learning and development'* (p. 175).⁵

Relating this specifically to the model of specialist support teachers, there is considerable support for the model of peripatetic teachers (sometimes termed itinerant teachers in international studies) as sources of professional support and developing additional CPD opportunities. For example:

"There is also a need to support teachers not just through continuous professional development opportunities, but also through support provided by other professionals.....This model usually entails teachers who are either special educators or mainstream teachers, who have been provided additional training, and who have visited a cluster of schools to work in partnership with class teachers to support them in meeting the needs of children with disabilities."⁶

Providing this type of support has a statutory basis in respect of teachers who hold the Mandatory Qualifications for Sensory Impairment and within the LA sensory impairment support service, it is usually these professionals who provide training and support to schools and other settings. The number, availability and specific capacity of individual SI support services will therefore have an impact on the level of CPD available locally. Other providers of CPD will include private individuals; often MQ qualified, with previous experience of working in LA SI services, schools or other settings, LA SEND training services, Health Authority professionals, resourced provisions, specialist units within schools or other specialist teachers or trainers. There are also courses provided by voluntary organisations or partnerships, such as NatSIP, which are intended as supplementary to the LA or other CPD offers.⁷

1.4 Schools and CPD general expenditure

Analysis from SchoolDash⁸ suggests that in 2017, state primary schools in England spent an average of 0.66% of their budgets on staff development and training, equivalent to £685 per teacher. State secondary schools in England spent 0.40%, or £378 per teacher. Only 19% of primary schools and 6% of secondary schools spent at least 1% of their budgets on staff development.

Their analysis concludes that while staff development spending has risen in nominal terms since 2012, in 2017 it declined by 7.5% in primary schools and 12% in secondary schools. Spending on

² Ekins, A., Savolainen, H., & Engelbrecht, P. 2016. An analysis of English teachers' self-efficacy in relation to SEN and disability and its implications in a changing SEN policy context, *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 31(2), 236-249.

³ Robinson, D. 2017. Effective inclusive teacher education for special educational needs and disabilities: Some more thoughts on the way forward. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 61, 164-178.

⁴ Ekins. 2016, *Op Cit*.

⁵ Robinson, D. 2017, *Op cit*.

⁶ Singal, N, Ware, H., Bhutan, S, K. 2017. *Inclusive Quality Education for Children with Disabilities*. Cambridge.

⁷ NatSIP submission to UCL for the Gap Analysis. 2018.

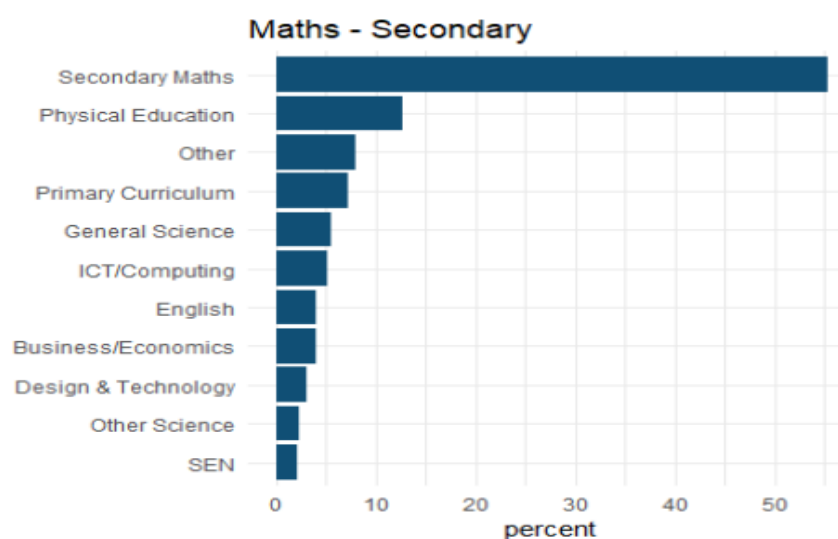
⁸ <https://www.schooldash.com/blog-1901.html#20190109>

learning resources, they note, has also been falling, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of school budgets. This suggests that recent changes in school spending patterns may reflect general funding pressures rather than specific reprioritisations.

Schools with higher proportions of deprived pupils tend to spend more on staff development, and generally have high levels of funding, so it may be that as there is an association between deprivation and SEN - that schools with a great proportion of SEN also have a higher percentage spend on SEN CPD, but we have no way of knowing this directly from this analysis.⁹ What is clear is that there is only very limited resource available for overall school CPD. This analysis would suggest that there is very little capacity for funding SEND specific CP from general school training.

This is confirmed if we look at programmes such as the Teacher Subject Specialist Training which is a school led delivery programme where good and outstanding schools and sixth form colleges can apply for funding to design and deliver TSST to meet local need. If we look at the subjects taken via this route, SEN is at the bottom of the list of courses taken.¹⁰ Most of the standard teacher CPD is subject-specific and not related to SEND.¹¹

Figure 2.5: The most common subjects currently taught by participants, by percentage and individual TSST subject taken



Note: Total Maths – Secondary participants = 1,602. Participants may teach more than one subject hence the sum may be greater than 100.

Given the very low levels of investment in schools' CPD generally, and the relatively low priority within CPD for generalist SEND training, there must be concerns about how much resource might be available for low-incidence specialist CPD for SI.

More generally Schools are reporting increasing pressure on their budgets¹² and a reduction in funding, which is impacting on schools' capacity to address SEND needs. Research by the National Association of Head Teachers in a survey of 637 schools found that 94% of school leaders said that *'they are finding it harder to resource the support required to meet the needs of pupils with SEND*

⁹ SchoolDash <https://www.schooldash.com/blog-1901.html#20190109>

¹⁰ DfE. Analysis of teacher supply, retention and mobility, September 2018.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² 2018 Annual Report on Education Spending, in England. Chris Belfield, Christine Farquharson, Luke Sibbets. Institute of Fiscal Studies, Nuffield Foundation. This showed that "Total school spending per pupil fell by 8% in real terms between 2009–10 and 2017–18" p7.

than they did two years ago'.¹³ While it is possible for schools to use the SEN delegated budget to support specific SEND CPD needs, we know that the SEN delegated budget is also under pressure, is not ring-fenced, and that schools will make decisions based on the prevalence of needs within the school.

1.5 Funding for CPD related to sensory impairment in schools

Within the SI specialist education sector, both in the UK and internationally, the importance of a specialist curriculum is fully recognised, as is the role of specialist teachers to support mainstream teachers and other staff in delivery and ensuring access to CPD. SI is recognised as needing a specific pedagogy to access to the curriculum, as noted by Norwich in a study of SEN and Pedagogy where it is noted that SI differs from general SEN, describing them as *'the two related areas of SEN (special educational need), deafness and visual impairment (sensory impairments) where the chapters indicate the need for additional curriculum programmes.'*¹⁴ This means that:

"[The] need for additional curriculum programmes were recognized. In the visual impairment area, there are programmes focussing on mobility, use of residual vision, maximum use of senses, and special literacy routes. In the hearing impairment area, there are distinctive communication routes, though only where communication is in terms of signed bilingual or signed English approaches. In the contribution on deafblind the reference to tangible symbol systems indicated the need for additional programmes."¹⁵

Until recently, the main resource for achieving curriculum access has been through the specialist SI support services offering free support and advice to schools. This has been supplemented by specific training programmes, either delivered through the support services, contracted in by the LA-provided training service or through commissioning private providers or other training arrangements.

The availability of SI CPD to schools and other settings is therefore very dependent on the capacity of SI services locally, though there are also other training providers in some areas. Until recently, schools and settings have expected and experienced most of this being delivered for free as part of LA support. However, that picture is changing. Specialist support services are particularly vulnerable to pressures on the HNB from which they have been mainly funded. As the HNB has come under pressure from the increase in EHCPs and other costs,¹⁶ LAs have sought to restrict or restructure provision from support services, including shifting costs to schools for training and other support services outside of their strict statutory duties.¹⁷ A NDCS survey of LA spending decisions found that:

"This year alone, over a third of local authorities (37%) have told us they plan to cut funding for these vital services. Deaf children in these areas will be losing £4m of support this year, with these local authorities on average cutting 10% from deaf children's services."¹⁸

¹³ See for example NAHT Empty Promises, 2018. The Crisis in Supporting Children with SEND.

¹⁴ Lewis, A. and Norwich, B. (eds.) 2004. Special Teaching for Special Children?: Pedagogies for Inclusion (Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press)

¹⁵ Lewis, A. and Norwich, B. 2007. How specialized is teaching children with disabilities and difficulties? Journal of Curriculum studies, 2007, Vol. 39, NO. 2, 127–150

¹⁶ Parish, N., Bryant, B., Swords, B. 2018. Have we reached a 'tipping point'? Trends in spending for children and young people with SEND in England. Isos Partnership. Bryant, B., Swords, B. 2018. Developing and sustaining an effective local SEND system. A practical guide for councils and partners. Isos Partnership.

¹⁷ NatSIP Future of the Sector, 2016.

¹⁸ NDCS Stolen Futures, 2018. NatSIP Gap Analysis submission and also Future of the Sector 2016.

Service reviews we have examined suggest that there is a similar trend for VI services.¹⁹ The more services are cut or remodelled to make schools pay, the more likely it is that CPD opportunities are reduced or not taken up; *'Cuts in funding - meaning a recruitment freeze - meaning retiring staff are not always replaced (against what looks to be a rise in SI numbers).* (217)²⁰

In addition, the landscape of LA support has been changing as the number of specialist teachers has been declining, with qualified ToDs in employment falling by 2% in 2017 and 14% since the CRIDE survey started in 2011.²¹ A recent RNIB Freedom of Information search found that between 2017 and 2018, over a third of LAs had a decrease in QTVIs, with a 15% decrease in TAs supporting VI CYP over the same period.²² At the same time the number of children with SI in resourced provision in mainstream has reduced as have the number of provisions²³. These provisions often had the role of providing additional support and training to the schools system and without them there are also more children in mainstream needing support: *"...there are fewer children in Resource Provision and more children with complex needs in mainstream and special settings."* HoSS. (102)²⁴

This is putting additional pressure on classroom teachers who now have children in their classroom who would previously have gone to a resourced provision, and there are fewer specialist teachers to provide additional support and CPD to mainstream staff within the system. There is also clear evidence that schools and settings are not always aware of the role of specialist SI teachers or the availability of support.²⁵

1.6 Traded service model of training support

The growing move to reduce specialist support is sometimes coupled with a traded services model, which some LAs have adopted. This has led to a situation where there is a gap between what schools are willing to buy in and what the specialist SI teacher is recommending. As a result, the strategies that a pupil needs cannot easily be put into place if the school is unwilling to pay for the recommended support where this is outside of an EHCP. Therefore, the issue may not just be about the availability but also the affordability of CPD for SI, and this may be part of the different perceptions of what CPD is available and which we explore further in the next section.

Feedback at NatSIP workshops on commissioning²⁶ has indicated that when a SI service becomes traded, usage from schools, even where the service was previously providing the service, drops off or stops altogether as schools make purchasing decisions about what sort of SEND support they will continue to purchase. Typical comments included: *"Since we have become a traded service, many of the schools I had been working with could not afford to commission the service and we have stopped providing support to children who were receiving our support before this move."* It is

¹⁹ NatSIP Future of Sector, 2016. NatSIP reviews all service consultations from LAs and has observed a trend of reducing the numbers of posts and levels of support provided for non-statutory duties.

²⁰ NatSIP Future of the Sector, 2016.

²¹ CRIDE, 2017.

²² Our Futures Matter RNIB, 2018. Figures are for those LAs providing comparable data.

²³ CRIDE, 2017.

²⁴ Quoted in NatSIP Future of the Sector, 2016.

²⁵ NatSIP Future of the Sector, 2016. NatSIP Gap Analysis report, 2018.

²⁶ NatSIP undertook a number of workshops with SI services and commissioners as part of the previous SEND contract. For a full account see NatSIP (2018) Commissioning Guide and Workbook for Sensory Impairment Services and NatSIP Future of Sector, 2016, which analyses in more detail the drivers for change in SI services and on which this section is partly based.

difficult for SI services to persuade schools to spend additional money on purchasing specific SI support or training when this is not offered free through the LA or required by the EHCP.

1.7 The challenge of low incidence in providing CPD for SI

As a low-incidence need, SI has lower visibility and priority within schools. Much of the provision and training is bespoke to individual teachers, and provides support at the point at which they are working with a particular child.²⁷

The very low-incidence and consequent prevalence in individual schools makes it not only difficult, but often uneconomic, for schools to routinely develop significant levels of expertise in this area. This means that there is little incentive to develop specific CPD opportunities, and schools rely on the specialist expertise of the SI professionals. Even where training is offered free of charge, expanding pressures on staff time and arranging for staff cover mean that staff cannot be released, except for out of school hours training. For example: *“There are lots of training opportunities available, especially in the London area, but schools and services are struggling to take up these offers due to available funds for paid for training and the associated cover costs.”*²⁸

There are also challenges in getting non-SI specialists to recognise the priority for specific HI, MSI and VI training. This applies to generic SEND managers in LAs, and to staff in mainstream and generic special schools.

“I have been told by a school with a [VI] resource that they did not consider any training regarding visual impairment to be a priority, so they were not willing to dedicate any INSET time to it in the foreseeable future...following that [meeting] sessions arranged for staff to come voluntarily were cancelled by the head, citing workload concerns. I have run courses on reformatting [curriculum materials] where staff have been released from their schools for only one session out of three and I’ve gone in to schools to deliver training to groups and only a fraction of those expected have turned up.”²⁹

The role of the LA specialist SI service is moving away from active teaching involvement and towards being mainly advisory in some LAs. As this happens, the numbers of specialist SI staff, both specialist teachers and trained support staff, are being cut along with the budget for the service. This creates challenges in those authorities for ensuring CPD provision is available.

1.8 Access to support and advice on SI technology

For provision and effective use of SI access technology, schools require specialist SI advice and support. For example, if funded via an EHCP direct to schools, then an SI service will ensure that the most appropriate equipment is purchased and set up. There are often technical problems linking to school IT networks, and more training within schools is required if equipment is to be used correctly. The rapid rate of technology change also means a rolling programme of renewal. Bidding for replacement equipment may incur delays, especially if the learner already has working equipment (albeit in need of upgrading).

²⁷ NATSIP Future of the Sector, 2016.

²⁸ HoSS feedback from call for evidence. October 2018. Cited in NatSIP Gap Analysis background document, 2018.

²⁹ Comment from VIEW Committee member as part of invitation to submit comments to the Gap Analysis cited in VIEW/RNIB response to the Gap Analysis September 2018.

Further, children with mild VI or HI are becoming more at risk of not achieving their potential as schools are less willing to pay for specialist SI support to implement strategies to support them. The result is that input on specific skills, such as learning to touch type and use available technology, may not be provided. Reliance on schools-based funding taken from the SEND budget is very problematic for SI. A reduced budget for a SI service means that in many LAs, the central stock of specialist equipment, available to trial with pupils, and use to train staff, is diminishing. It then becomes more and more difficult to provide advice to schools about what equipment and technological educational aids they should purchase for pupils. This was reflected in our Future of the Sector survey where respondents noted that; *“The engagement of schools and staff in schools to accept responsibility for equipment and supporting CYP with hearing impairment.”* (21) was an issue. Further that a key role of support was to ensure schools *“Accept responsibility for equipment and supporting CYP with hearing impairment. Allowing staff to have training in understanding the needs of deaf students and the potential impact on their learning and access in classrooms.”*³⁰ Another problem with funding for equipment being delegated to schools for pupils with SEND is that in many schools, this funding goes into a general pot from which they are unwilling to buy anything specifically for the child with a SI.

1.9 The organisation of specialist support and CPD

It is important to be aware that, unlike larger population SEND groups, it is not appropriate to delegate all responsibility for pupils with SI to schools. It is unlikely that a school will have the necessary expertise to address SI needs, and teachers will have rarely taught a pupil with SI on a regular basis. This has been consistently recognised by Government policy, as there has been continued support for a specialist qualification, additional funding and statutory recognition of the role and its expertise.³¹ Ofsted noted the dangers of delegation for specialist services and argued that delegation of specialist support services could lead to a number of problems including:

"First, where LEAs delegated funds for small services, the schools received too little money to buy sufficient support when they needed it. Others received funding even though they might not have any pupils who required support. The funding, though sufficient to run a small central service, when divided between many schools was inadequate to ensure pupils with the most complex needs had access to sufficient specialist advice.

Second, where resources had been delegated, the LEAs lacked the capacity to monitor adequately the progress of pupils with the greatest needs or to target resources on helping schools to improve where the standards achieved by pupils with SEN were unacceptably low."³²

All of these considerations would specifically apply to the provision of Sensory Impairment Support services.

³⁰ NatSIP Future of the Sector, 2016.

³¹ DfE, 2015. Special Educational Needs and Disability: code of practice. Chapter 6.

³² Ofsted, 2005. Inclusion: The impact of LEA support and outreach services p5.

1.10 Models of Training

In looking at the model of CPD provided, it is important to place the discussion on SI CPD within the framework of the Code of Practice (CoP) emphasis on the balance between general and specialist support.³³ Thus, there is a need for specialist SI teachers to continue to support directly children with SI, as well as provide training support and advice to SENCOs, teachers, TAs and other support staff. Models of support and CPD need to work within a framework where support and training work are provided, as part of a team, by individual teachers, support workers and the school.

SENCOs can also play a crucial role in co-ordinating and supporting teachers' support for SI. However, we have significant evidence from the training work that NatSIP has done³⁴ that there is little focus on SI within the SENCO training module and, once alerted to the availability, SENCOs welcome more support in this area. It would be possible to provide post-qualification CPD to enhance their knowledge. Even were this forthcoming, it would not substitute for the SI teachers' specialist support, but would help with whole school approach. Furthermore, the CPD framework for SI beyond the MQ is not helped by the lack of clarity around the formal requirements and status of some key roles. For example, communication support workers, intervenors and habilitation support workers do not have a clear qualification framework and progression route. Often, TAs who work specifically with children with SI also do not have any clear basic minimum training route and standards are not nationally agreed for many areas of support work.³⁵

³³ DfE, 2015. SEND Code of Practice.

³⁴ NatSIP, 2019. Evaluation Report on SENCO training.

³⁵ NatSIP has mapped the current training pathways for SI see Training Pathways NatSIP <https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/training-pathways/1369-training-pathways-doc>

2 The survey on SI CPD

2.1 The Survey

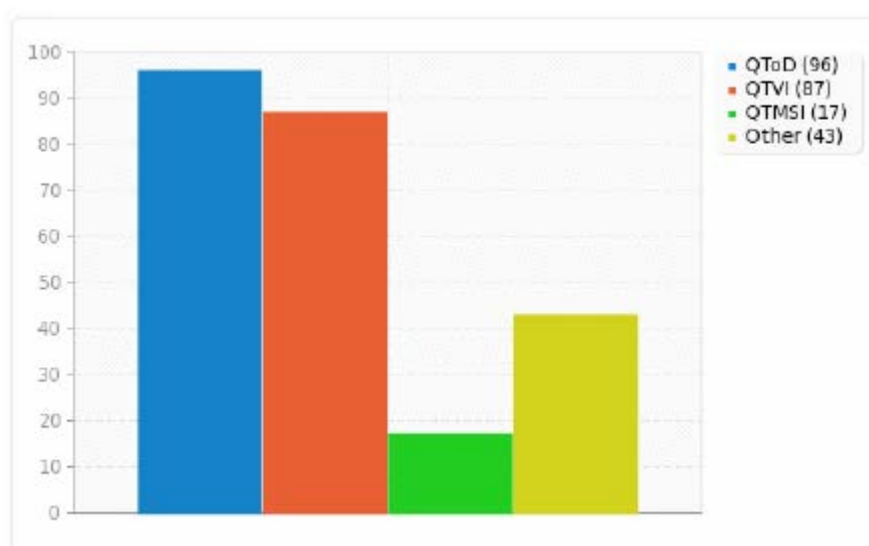
To discover what the relationship was between potential offers of CPD from specialist teachers and the perception of the mainstream workforce, NatSIP conducted a survey of each group. The surveys were carried out in a very short timescale. The SI professional's survey was promoted through the Heads of Services email forum, the NatSIP website and at two conferences of VIEW and BATOD, the latter occurring two days before the survey deadline for submission of responses.

The non-SI professionals were recruited mainly through contacts that NatSIP and SI services had with schools. While this is helpful in ascertaining what the training offer is and how far this has been taken up between schools and settings working with or in contact with SI services. It may not be typical of relationships where there is no direct contact between a SI support services where schools or settings have no children with SI at that point. A full description of the survey process is included in Appendix 1.

2.2 SI Professionals; Provision of Training

The SI professionals' survey received 210 responses which comprised the following professional categories.

Fig 1. Different Professional Categories

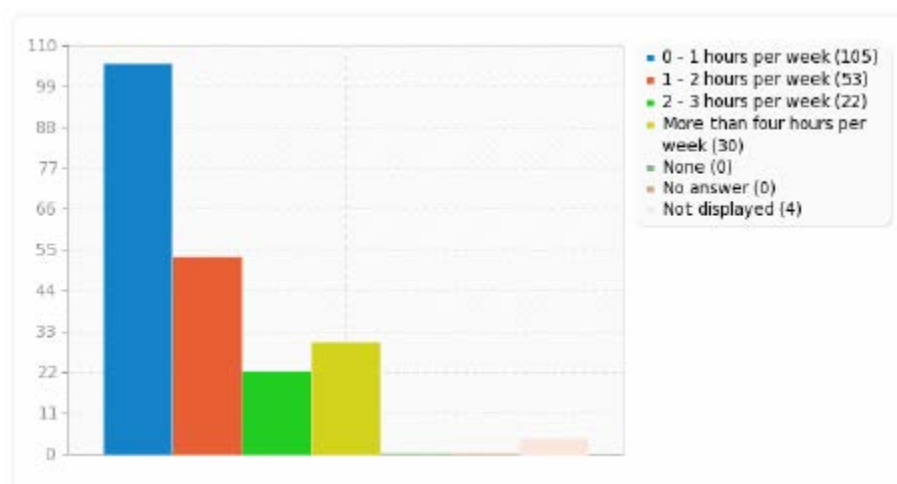


The 'other' category included Educational Audiologists, Habilitation specialists, Vision Assessors and trainee teachers amongst others. The respondents are reasonably well balanced between the different specialisms. We did not ask for geographical location as there is evidence this has suppressed response rates in the previous UCL Gap Analysis survey.

We asked how many offered training as part of their service, 98.13% of the respondents said their service offered CPD opportunities with only 1.87% saying their service did not do so. In looking at the amount of training offered, almost half the respondents spent a least an hour a week on training, with almost a quarter spending 1-2 hours a week and around 10% spending 2-3 hours a

week. This suggests that for SI services where the respondents work, there is a training offer of varying intensity available for schools and settings in their areas.

Fig 2. Number of hours respondents spend on training activity



No services said that they had never been asked for any CPD support. 11% of respondents did not answer the time question, presumably because it was not relevant to their role or they did not know.

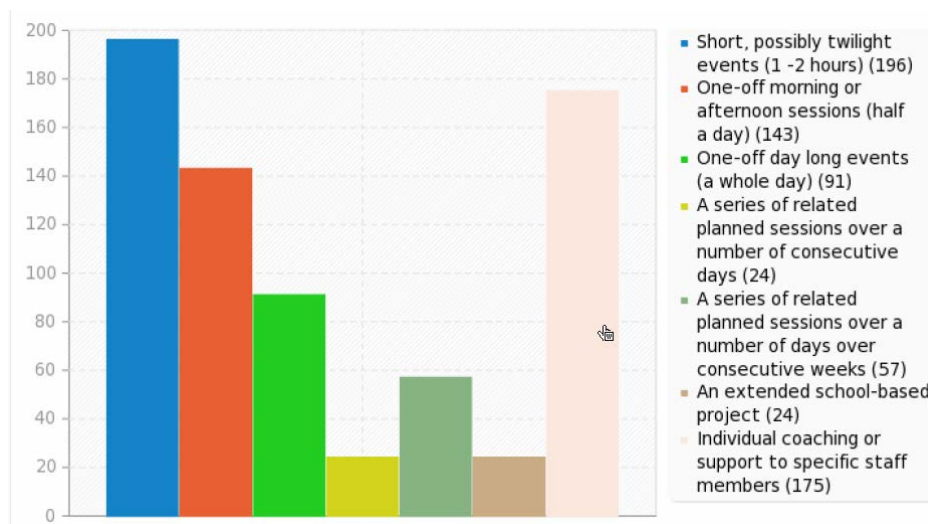
Out of the types of training offered:

- short sessions of 1-2 hours were the most predominant (91%)
- individual coaching and support (81%)
- one morning or afternoon session (66%)
- day sessions (42%)
- a series of planned sessions (26%)
- longer term school-based projects (11%).

In the comments, it was clear that the reason for the predominance of shorter, sometimes 'twilight' type sessions was that it was easier and less costly for schools to participate in these, as releasing staff was easier. Even here they could often be problems:

"Twilight sessions in schools can be poorly attended because staff are called away to emergencies or teaching assistants are asked to cover an afterschool club or are not paid beyond 15:30" (461)

Fig 3. Type of training offered



Some of the comments illustrate how these offers have been developed:

“The service provides support for mainstream teaching staff, teaching assistants and SENCOs, in early years settings, schools and colleges. We offer:

1. Central training for mainstream TAs and teachers as a 6 week block of day and half day training with interim tasks, carried out over time
2. On-going regular TA network groups for in-school TAs to meet with Sensory staff
3. In school coaching for TAs
4. Training of Vision ACVs (Agents for Change for Vision) as link specialists in both mainstream and special schools
5. Peer training
6. Bespoke whole school training.

These have been devised in response to consultation with schools about what they require.” (127)

And the range of offerings to different groups within the school:

“We provide a lot on an individual basis plus twilights or SDD whole school training. Additionally, we provide training through SEND Forums, Early Years and School SENCO Training. We also provide one off days for specific areas e.g. a VI Condition, which includes CPD for families as well as settings.

VSSS also offers the BTEC Level 3 NVQ Training for Teaching Assistants working with vision impaired and deaf CYP - this is a 5 day course over the year.

When we bring CYP together from mainstream settings e.g. VI CYP to learn specific skills, we put on training for the TAs in schools at the same time. We also provide training through specific conferences e.g. workshops for SENDCOs.” (159)

And:

“Every school within our Service is offered a training session as part of the package of either advisory or teaching programmes. This can be for whole school/department/Key Stage Subject Specifics. This is also for early years settings and special schools and we also have organised sessions for Health visitors, SEN case officers across LAs and SENCO networks. We have bought in VI training from a school for the deaf. Fact sheets are available on the website as a resource. Braille network days for TAs working with pupils who use Braille. TA network days HI and VI focusing on aspects of support or technology.” (164)

Some services deliver very significant amounts of training which they monitor closely; for example:

“It is hard to quantify how much training we do over a year but we keep a record of the number of staff that we work with and record the evaluation outcomes of that training. So, for example, since September 2018 we have completed 33 sessions and trained 331 staff in different settings, here in Leeds. Out of those 331 staff, 296 said they would change their working practice as a result of the training. 99% of all staff trained said the training met the intended outcomes to some or a greater extent. Since the records started in Jan 2016 we have trained 1211 staff across the Leeds area. We also do training for the local college as well as the university.” (246)

In terms of what SI professionals were most routinely asked to provide these were:

- support for strategies for the inclusion of pupils with SI (88%)
- curriculum access issues (81%)
- access to SI equipment and technology (80%)
- identification of SI and its implications for learning (64%)

There were also significant numbers of requests on a range of language and access issues such as;

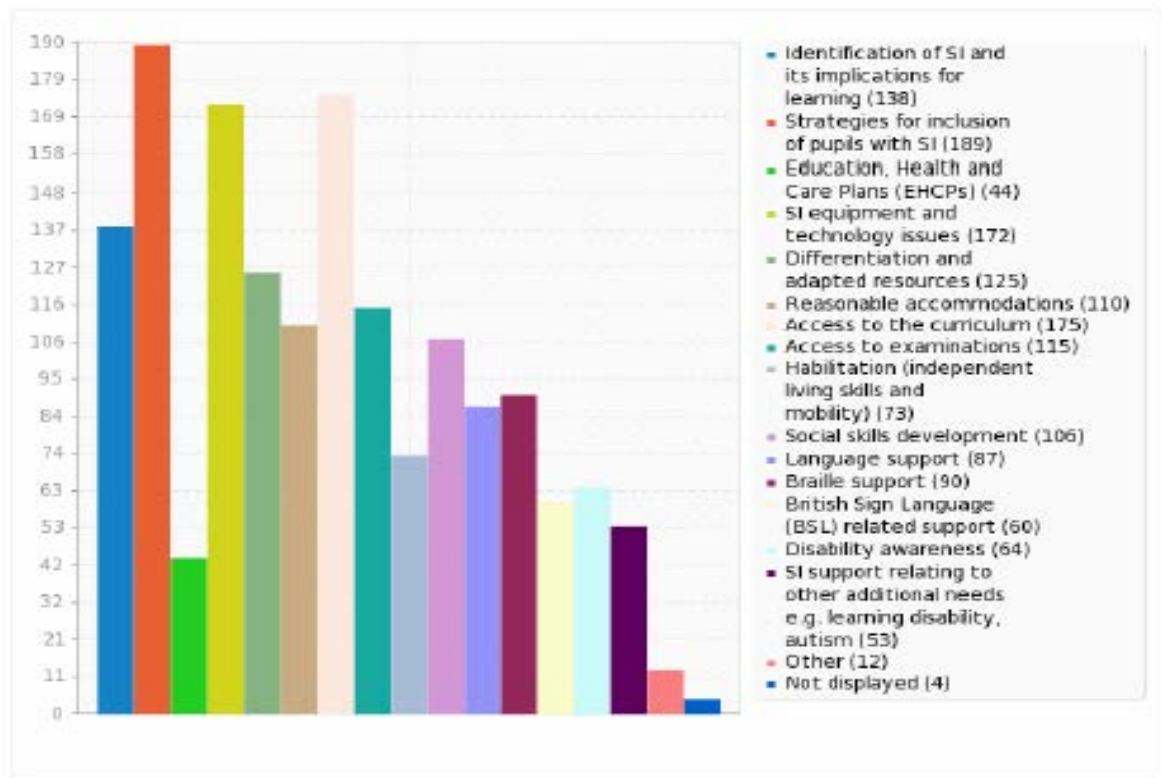
- differentiation and adapted resources (58%)
- reasonable accommodations (51%)
- access to examinations (53%)

The least requested were;

- advice on BSL (28%)
- advice on additional needs (24%).

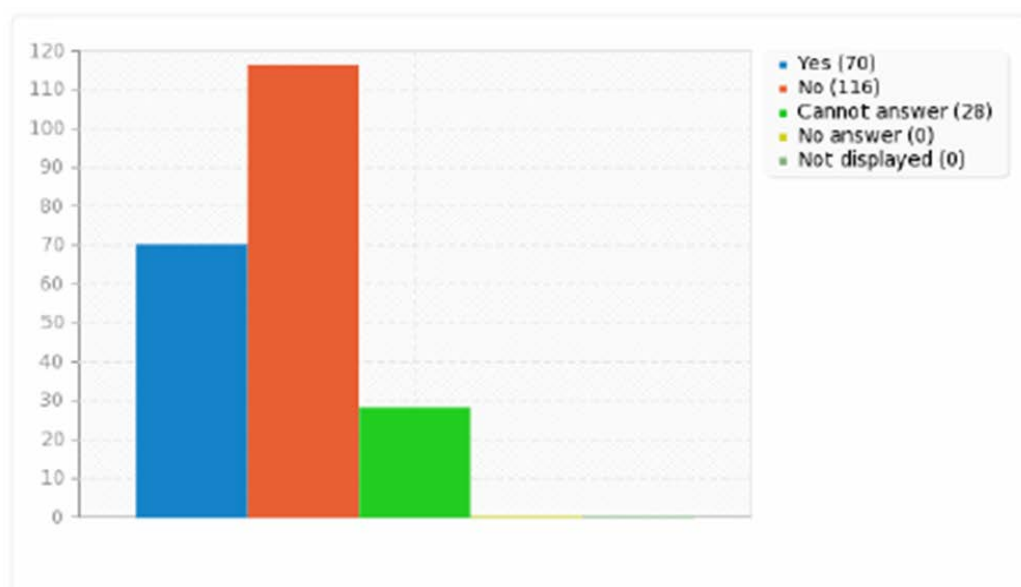
These areas illustrate both the interface of SI with disability as well as SEN which makes SEN specialism different from some SEN needs and often more complex.

Fig. 4 Content of Training Offered



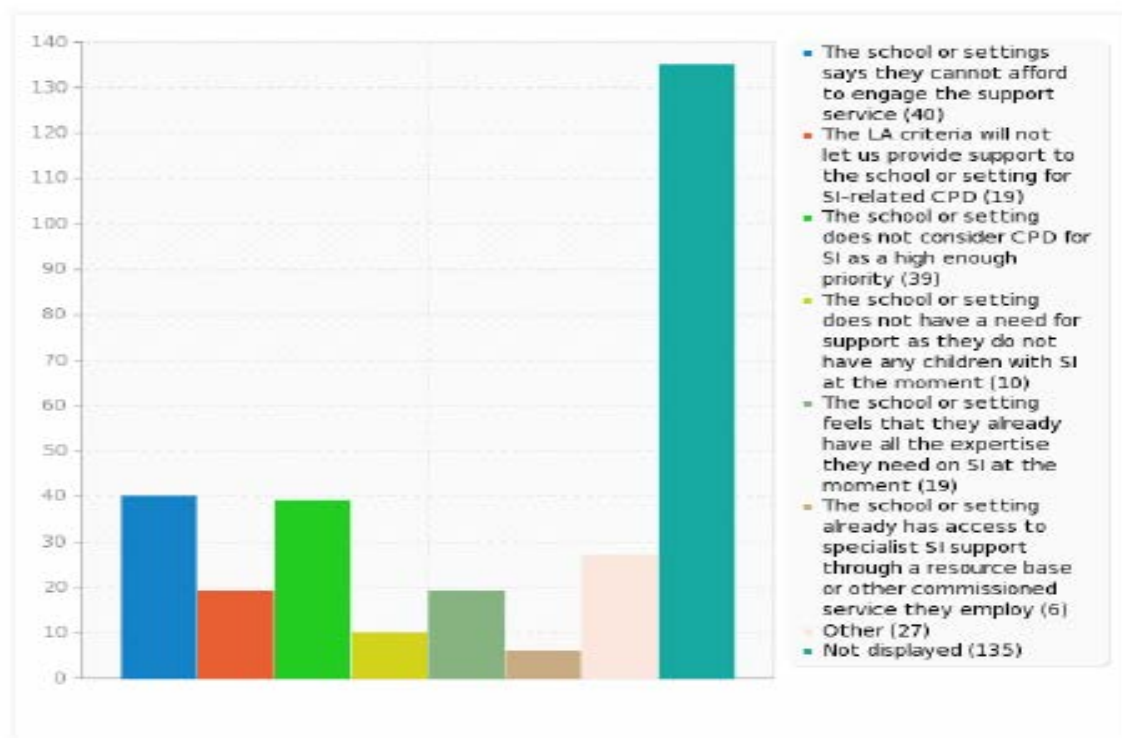
We asked SI professionals if they were aware of schools or settings who would like to have more support from them but are not able to access it. 32% thought that there were schools or settings wanting more support but not able to access it, 54% thought this was not case and 13% not being able to answer the question. It is important to note that since most respondents are providing services to schools, this is mainly measuring the potential gap between what they receive and what they feel they need.

Fig. 5 Access to Support



In looking at the reasons why schools and settings were not able to access more support, the main reason given was that the school or setting says they cannot afford to engage the support service (18%) and that the school or setting does not see CPD as high enough priority (18%). Other reasons included that LA criteria would not permit the service to provide support (8%) or that the school or setting already felt they had the expertise they needed at the moment (8%)

Fig. 6 Reasons for not accessing support



In the comments, specific reasons were given for not being able to provide support. These included the capacity of the service to deliver the training due to staff cuts:

“The setting would like British Sign Language available for staff and students but we do not have capacity due to staffing to deliver this. We do have the staff with the relevant qualifications, but they were made redundant from the evening class element and cut this service.” (125)

“Capacity of SI children on caseload and not enough Habilitation specialists working for the service. Due to retirement the posts have not been refilled and therefore the issue is capacity.” (237)

“Sensory Service input to settings reduced by LA due to reduction in service budget.” (274)

“We are currently under review and face cuts to capacity. This will have a direct impact on the CPD opportunities we will be able to offer.” (277)

“Due to severe cutbacks in the Sensory Service in [place name] QToDs are stretched to meet the needs of the HI children. Less and less time is allocated to each child, which means less time for supporting the settings.” (286)

“As QTVI we are being asked to train schools in bigger groups centrally, which we do but find more and more are unable to release staff due to costs. We currently only charge £10 a day to our schools for resources but we are being told to increase this cost as SEN is over spent. Schools are requesting inset training but this is more time consuming for us and we have increased caseload because of staff cuts.” (380)

“Our Local Authority is currently reviewing the service and has proposed: reducing the number of ToDs, having training as a sold service and also removing TLR responsibility points. If it goes ahead as proposed, we will not have the capacity to deliver training to schools - schools can't afford to buy in training and don't even know that they need it - and the staff will have the responsibility to lead taken out of their job descriptions so will not be delivering training as part of their job description. Extremely short sighted.” (434)

"These are answers from our current situation. However, it is likely that the availability of training is to be cut greatly with changes to the service happening with effect from September 2019." (444)

The cost of purchasing CPD was often cited as a key issue:

"Cost is an ongoing issue for settings especially when considering low incidence needs as training budgets are cut." (250)

"We can only deliver support to school with children on our caseload unless they purchase an additional SI package." (557)

"Our service is a Traded service, so schools have to buy us in. This creates situations when we think awareness and access to the curriculum is necessary, but schools won't get training in as the training was "only" applicable to one or a few children." (259)

"The range of training and development depends on maintaining and developing knowledge of trainers which can be inaccessible due to costs and timetabling. Many settings are restricted by budget and time." (156)

"Schools occasionally ask us to contribute to their whole staff training by providing workshops on VI and then change their minds when they find there is a charge for this. Schools are happy to pay a modest fee for TAs and teachers to attend VI Awareness training when they know they will have a pupil with VI in their class. There is no charge for setting-based training centred around the needs of a particular child in school." (178)

"Due to funding cuts for schools and SI being low incidence, with schools either not having any students with SI or only 1 student, there is very little take-up in the courses we offer (as a number of courses have a fee)." (292)

"CPD for schools has a cost associated. Some schools feel that they cannot justify spending some of their CPD budget on training which is specific to small numbers of pupils (in some cases 1 pupil in a school)." (301)

"Fewer schools are willing to pay for SI CPD and prefer the short 1hr free training provided to school instead of the full day training. However, there are some schools (who are able to afford to do so) who are enquiring about extra CPD i.e. a more detailed follow-up training on audiology or for specific needs such as ANSD/APD. Unfortunately, everything comes down to money and how much the schools can afford. The training is on offer out there but they may not be able to take it up due to depleting school budgets." (316)

The fact that schools will often take up the training when it is free but not when charged for is line with previous feedback to the future of the sector report and commissioning work which NatSIP has undertaken.³⁶

A major issue mentioned a number of times was the lack of capacity within the school to release staff or commitment to the training even when that is done. For example:

"Support is currently provided at no cost to those schools and settings where there are pupils with a sensory impairment that meets service criteria. Despite this, it can be difficult to secure adequate INSET time to work with the whole school." (135)

"I think most staff are expected to do this training in their own time after school hours but for many they have other commitments out of school hours so although schools pass on the information, many individual staff can't get to the training, and training time during school hours is very limited - I am not sure what the answer is but we are trying to find other ways to create training that is more flexible or accessible - eg on video. Some schools are far better at encouraging their staff to attend training." (168)

³⁶ NatSIP, 2017. Future of the Sector, NatSIP, 2018. Commissioning Guide.

"It is a regular occurrence that staff (teachers more often than support staff) do not turn up for the planned session as, on the day, it turns out that they cannot be released after all or something that they feel is more important comes up. This suggests to me that managers in schools do not support and encourage staff to attend VI training as it is not a priority for the school." (243)

"Often, staff cannot be released to attend CPD on SI - no cover. Settings have no available inset days for SI." (274)

"Schools are often unwilling to release staff for training as they cannot provide cover. It is hard to deliver after-school sessions as many school TAs are on term time only contracts and TAs are not contracted to work after school closes. There needs to be a message from local authorities that schools with VI CYP must have specialist training to build their capacity to meet the CYPs needs and their duty." (335)

"We provide 5 full-day in-house training days in Deaf Awareness which is offered free to all schools. We do have some schools who are repeatedly invited and repeatedly decline because they say they cannot release staff for a full day. In the past we have offered half days but this did not prove more popular, in fact when we asked schools they said they would prefer a full day." (480)

There were also concerns about the way support was organised to deliver the greatest long-term impact within the school. For example:

"The majority of training is done one-to-one with targeted school staff who work directly with the pupil. This does not support a whole school approach to meeting the needs of the pupils."

"This one-to-one approach also means that as pupils move up the school, training has to be repeated and skills of previous staff may be lost. There is a particular risk for pupils with more mild/moderate hearing and vision loss, whose level of SI may not trigger regular, free support from the service and for whom the school does not recognise the impact of the SI and the need for ongoing CPD." (135)

"Schools seem content on the whole to have one-to-one informal training when we visit students, which means training is random and doesn't disseminate throughout the school." (398)

Furthermore, schools and settings are often unaware of what needs they may have but are also unwilling to find out or explore these. For example:

"I regularly recommend and offer training for reformatting resources into accessible formats and for the use of accessibility settings on technology devices but schools rarely take the offers up. It is my belief that they lack awareness in these areas but don't think that they do: they don't know what they don't know." (243)

They can also misunderstand the role and expertise of the service:

"Some schools treat us like a therapy service rather than an education service. There needs to be training around the wording in documents such as Statements, EHCPs, IDPs and One Plans, so that the support is delivered by the right person at the right time." (445)

There was also some concern about what training could achieve given the complex nature of SI and at what point this needed more expert support. For example;

"Also there is a limit to how much you can train staff - you can raise awareness and train teachers about quality first teaching. You often train TAs on practical aspects of provision such as adapting materials but many children and young people with severe/profound sensory impairment require a high level of specialism and access to additional curriculum areas that are specialist and take a long time to develop." (558)

Others had concerns that training should not be seen as a substitute at school level for when specialist support was required:

“In a previous local authority team I was asked to design generic/CPD style training. When we reviewed it, all the team agreed that it had limited merits, would not build capacity in a school and was unlikely to be seen as satisfactory to those asking for a type of training which we believed, and this team believes, is irresponsible to provide - namely training that enables the school to eschew specialist support.” (428)

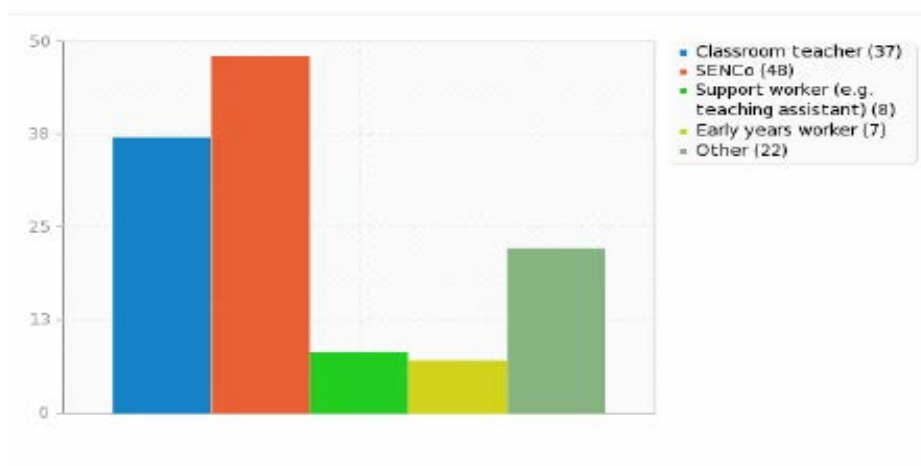
A number of responses also reference the more general reduction in TAs due to schools cutting back and the impact this had on training and CPD being retained in schools:

“Specific issues relating to SEN cuts resulting in loss of TA time, so very difficult for children to receive appropriate support and TAs to be trained.” (452)

2.3 School based survey

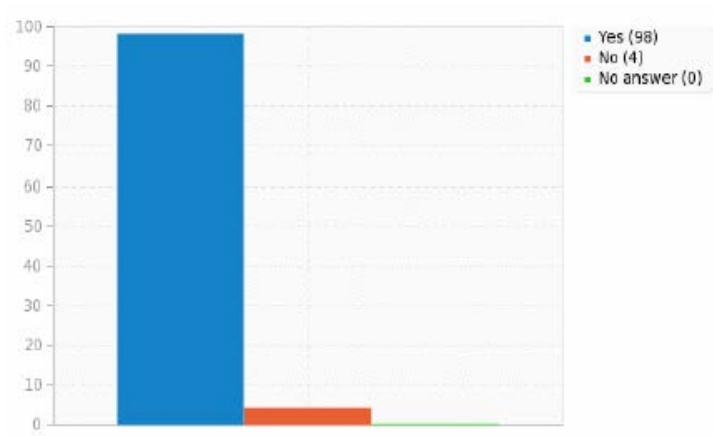
We also asked schools-based staff for their perception of the availability and support for SI CPD. We had 102 responses to this survey which broke down into the following roles-Fig 7.

Fig 7. Respondents Roles



Others included Heads, Deputy heads, Assistant head, nursery manger, nursery nurse, nursery teacher, area SENCO manager, and teaching assistant EYFS.

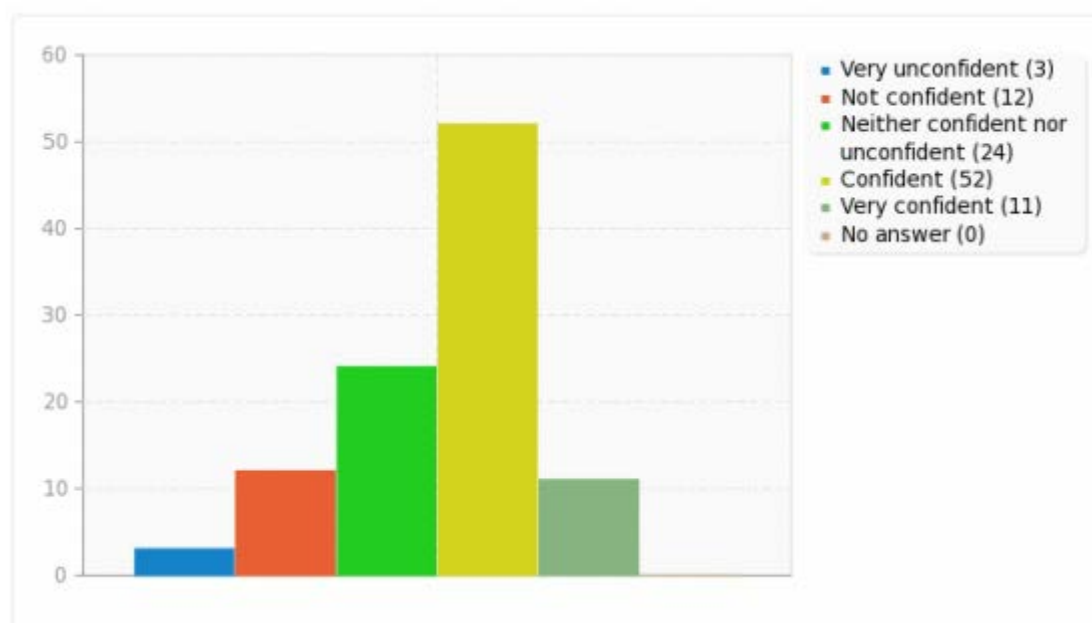
Fig 8. Do you have a child or young person with SI in your school or setting?



Nearly all of the respondents (96%) had a child or young person with SI in their setting.

We asked school staff how confident they felt about meeting the needs of a child or young person with sensory impairment.

Fig 9 How confident do you feel in being able to meet the needs of a child or young person with sensory impairment?



It would be expected that confidence levels should be high. Overall, 10% are very confident and 50% confident. Given that the respondents nearly all have a CYP with SI in their setting, there would presumably be at least some CPD or support relating to this. What is perhaps more surprising is that 23% were still neither confident nor unconfident and 14% either not confident or very unconfident.

Their answers to this question shed some light on this. Many of those who are confident referenced the support or training that they had received. A number cited the direct support, training or resources received from SI teams:

"We have regular contact with the VI team. We have been provided with training, resources and ongoing support. I have completed the VI and MSI online training which was very helpful. I was also sent information for the MSI conference which happened last year, and this was also very helpful." (43)

"I feel confident to support children with sensory impairment due to the wonderful support we have from the teachers of the deaf and EYSenit's." (100)

"We are having regular visits from Wandsworth Vision Service who have provided lots of helpful advice. We have been able to put provisions into place which are helping the child." (306)

Yes - we have excellent support from the Support for Learning Service and our specialist teacher for the deaf provides up-to-date relevant support to a range of staff. For this reason we feel confident. Without this service we would be less confident. (264)

However even when support was present, the level of support was not always considered commensurate with the challenges professionals faced:

"We have support from our VI and HI service who provide management plans which are shared with all teaching staff and this helps with general planning but in terms of really understanding the issues and difficulties I would consider myself as being less confident." (238)

"I have spent the past 12 month engaged as a one-to-one with a child with MSI and believe I have developed a good understanding on how to meet their needs. Of course, there is always more to learn when you are looking after a child with a range of complex needs/requirements." (62)

For those that felt less confident there were a range of reasons. These included not having the resources to secure all the support needed:

"The hearing advisory worker is very supportive in explaining the medical conditions and how to adapt practice and the classroom environment to make it more accessible to the children with the needs. The constraint we have is the budget in that we are not able to afford all of the resources to support these children that we would like." (138)

"We are well supported by the Sensory Impairment Services, but I do not have the theoretical background and understanding that would give me more confidence." (16)

"There is a lot of knowledge about supporting children with learning difficulties. I feel that less time is spent in training on children with sensory difficulties. I am basing a lot of what I advise on the advice of wider professionals or reading/research I have done myself." (296)

While for some, there was very limited support or knowledge due to low incidence:

"Limited training in this area. Lack of resources and access to services." (193)

"A general lack of focused assistance. While I am aware of CPD being available, I have found it difficult to find the time to use it." (124)

"This is a specialised area and little training is given for these type of needs. Furthermore, schools generally have less contact with pupils with sensory impairment and so experience of teaching and meeting the needs of these pupils is much less than other types of need." (88)

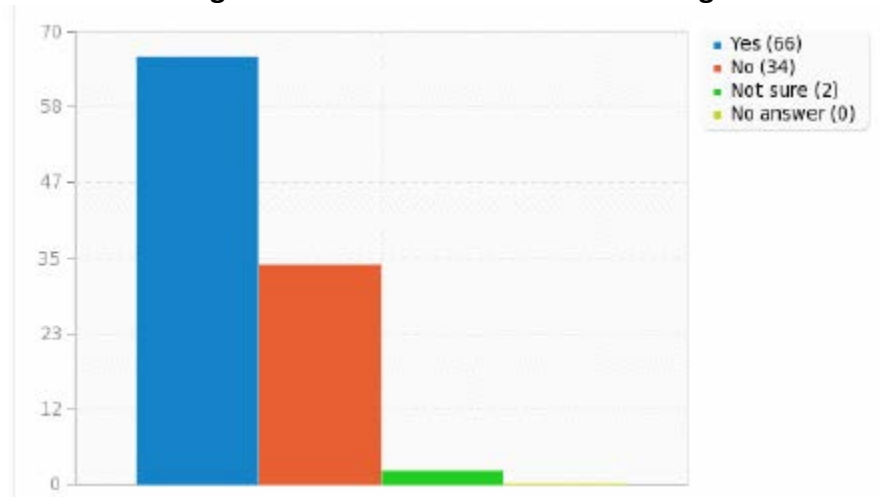
Lack of clarity about who can support:

"Unsure of procedures for referral to outside agencies and lack of time to find resources, info etc. Lack of staff to support the children. Frustration at lack of SENCO time, who is off at the moment and not been replaced and when in work part-time and Nursery not a priority. Lack of training." (91)

No additional training:

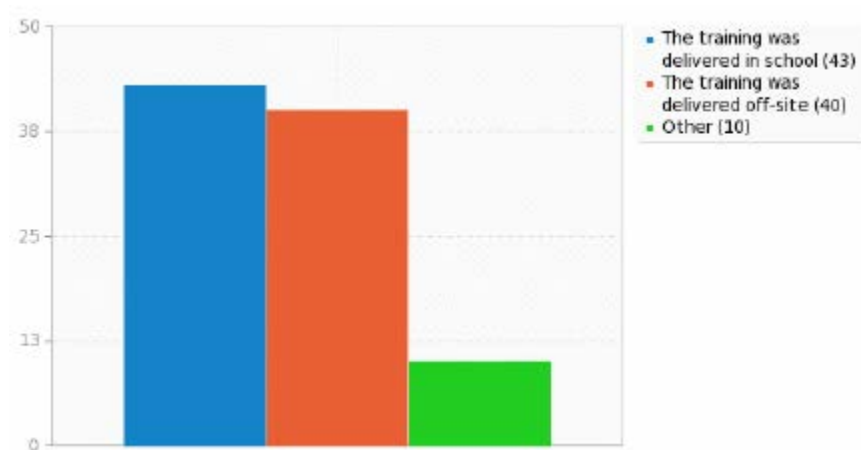
"No CPD for whole school." (208)

Fig 10. Those who had received training



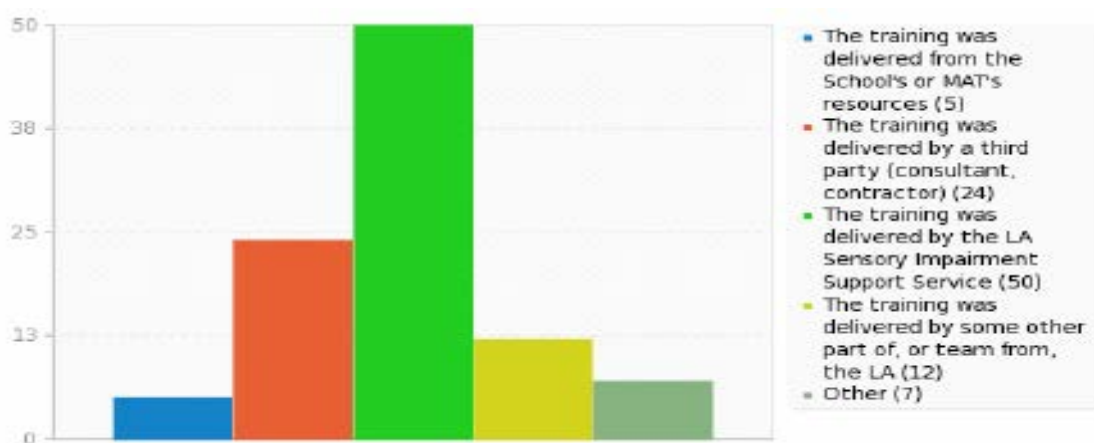
We also asked if respondents had received specific training around the needs of children with SI. While 64% had received training. 33% had not. Again, the number not having received specific training on SI is surprising, given that nearly all the respondents had a child or young person with SI in their school or setting.

Fig 11. Where was the training delivered?



Of this training, roughly half was delivered in school and half off site. In comments about the training, some respondents noted that not all of it had been delivered recently.

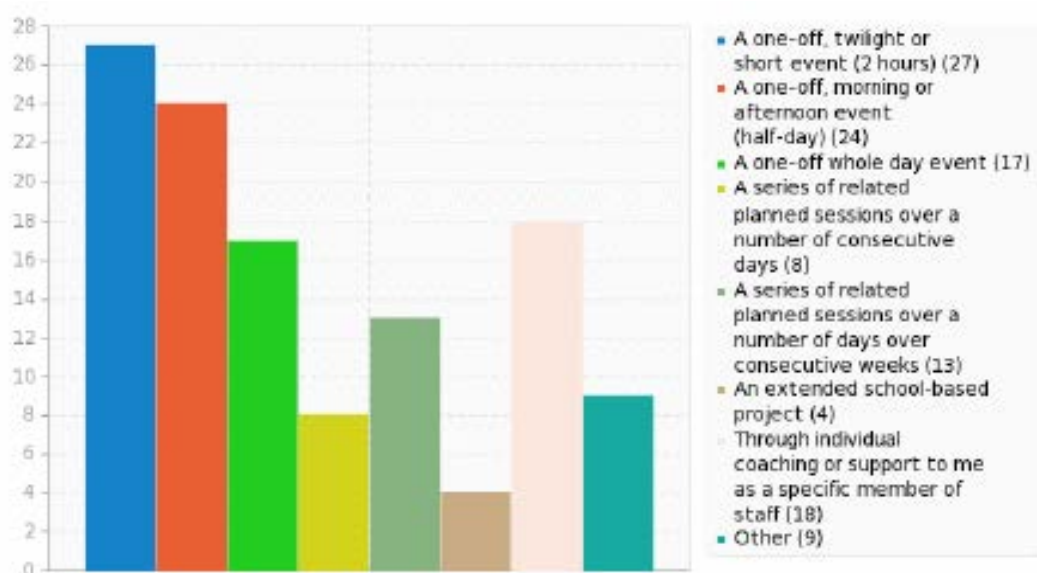
Fig 12. Who delivered the training



The delivery of the training was through a number of different provider routes, with the LA SI service being the most common (74%) followed by third party contractor or consultant (35%) or another team from the LA (17%) or from within the schools or MAT's own resources (7%).

While the LA SI service remains the predominant route, it is interesting to note that there is clearly also significant independent market for advice and support, and also that LA generic SEND teams are also providing advice and support on SI.

Fig 13. Types of Event or Training



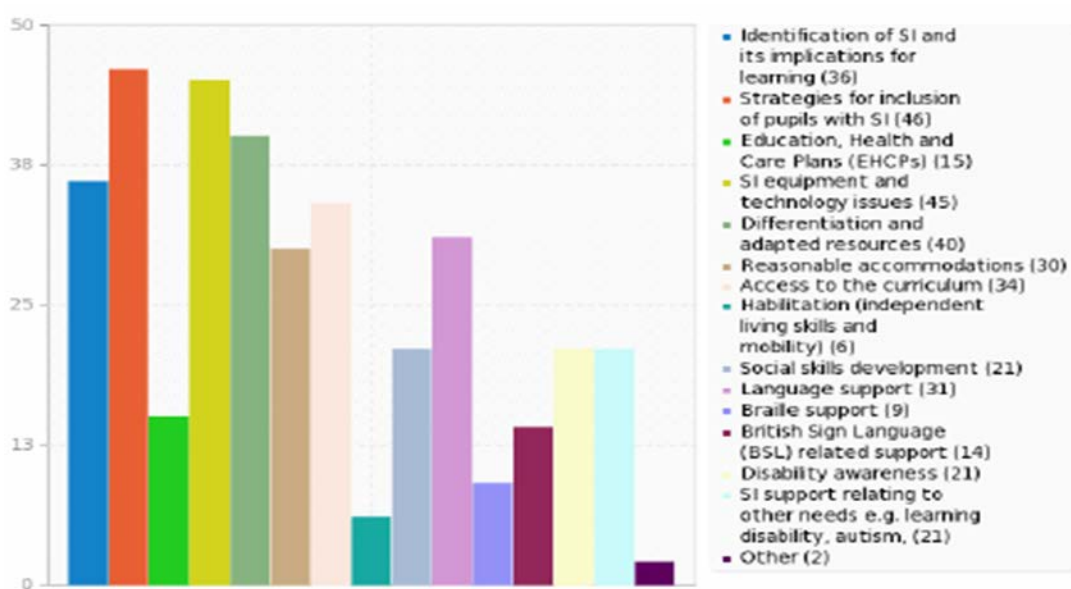
We asked the non-SI professionals a question about type of event or training they had attended. (This question was intended to complement the question we asked SI professionals about the type of training they offered). Not surprisingly there is some similarity in the answers given.

We noted that for non-LA provided training, individual support and coaching is far less common. It is clear that non LA delivery is less about individual support. This is unsurprising, given the key role of LA staff in supporting individual pupils and through mentoring and one-to-one CPD for staff involved.

We found that for school staff:

- 40.30% had attended a one-off, twilight or short event (2 hours)
- 35.82% had attended a one-off, morning or afternoon event (half-day)
- 25.37% had attended a one-off whole day event
- 26.87% had received individual coaching or support
- 19.40% had attended a series of related planned sessions over a number of days over consecutive weeks
- 11.94% had attended a series of related planned sessions over a number of consecutive days
- 5.97% had been involved with an extended school-based project.

Fig 14. The subjects on which training had been received



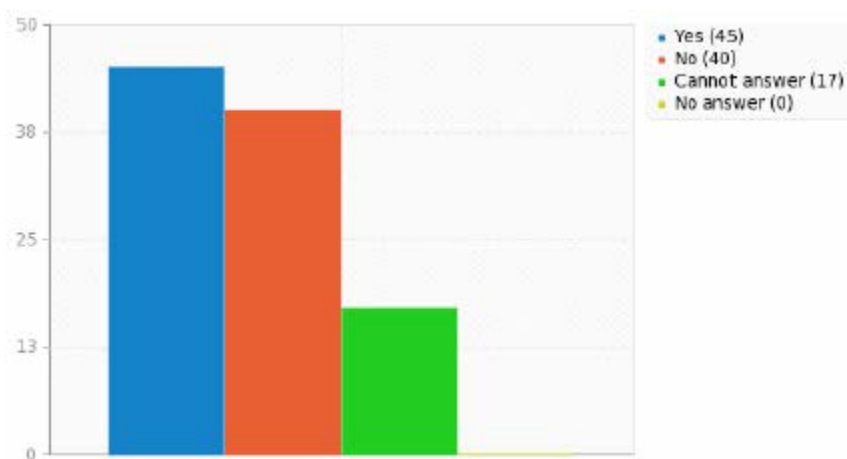
We asked non-SI professionals a question about the subjects on which they had received training.

It is interesting to note that there are only small differences between the take up of training offered by SI professionals and the proportion of training undertaken by the workforce. This is probably explained by the wider range of providers sourced by the schools and settings. This overall picture clearly suggests a hierarchy of what schools find most useful or prioritise, which the services or other providers respond to in formulating what they offer. The most obvious category related to the current reforms is specific training on EHCPs, but the take up is low compared with other offers. This may simply reflect that fewer mainstream workforce are directly involved in the production of EHCPs and that some of the training offered is to more generic teams of staff. There are quite large variations around Braille and habilitation between what is offered by LA SI services and what is taken up by respondents.

Subject	Non professionals reporting taking training in this subject	SI professionals reporting training offered in this subject ³⁷
Access to the curriculum	50.7%	81.8%
Braille support	13.4%	42.0%
British Sign Language related support	20.9%	28.0%
Differentiation and adapted resources	59.7%	58.4%
Disability awareness	31.3%	29.9%
Education, Health and Care Plans	22.3%	20.5%
Habilitation (independent living skills and mobility)	8.9%	34.1%
Identification of SI and its implications for learning	53.7%	64.4%
Language support	46.2%	40.6%
Reasonable accommodations	44.7%	51.4%
SI equipment and technology issues	67.1%	80.3%
SI support relating to other needs e.g. learning disability, autism %	31.3	24.7%
Social skills development	31.3%	49.5%
Strategies for inclusion of pupils with SI	68.6%	88.3%

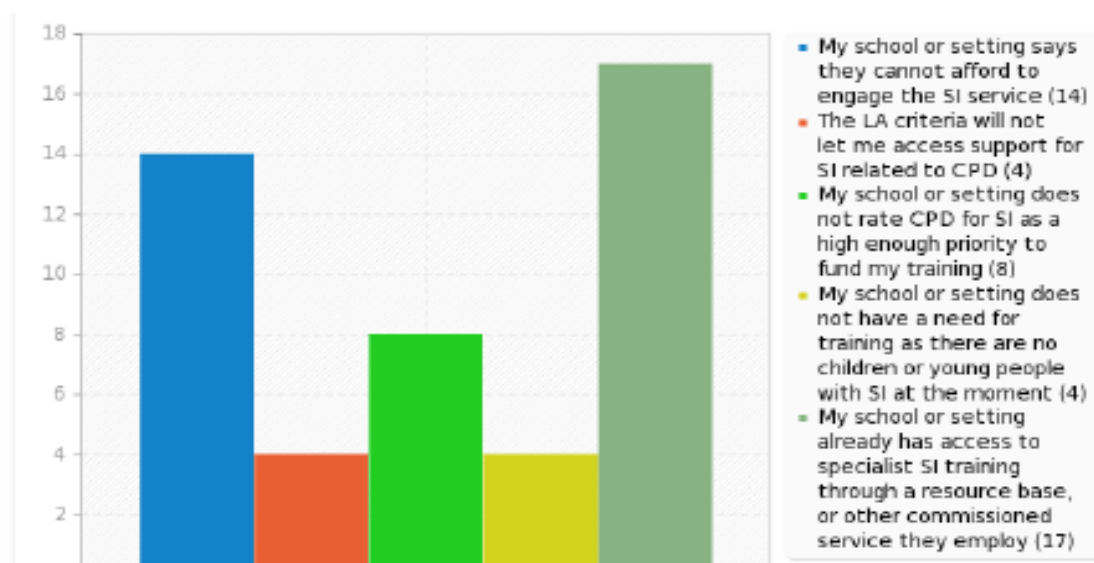
³⁷ Examination access excluded from this list as not asked for the non SI professional group.

Fig 15. Access to Training



We also asked how many non-SI professionals felt they needed more training but were not able to access it. 44% reported that they needed more training. 39% reported that they did not.

Fig 16. Reasons for not accessing training



Of those saying they could not access additional support the main reasons were:

- 34% reported that the school or setting says they cannot afford to engage the SI service
- 19% reported that the school or setting does not rate CPD for SI as a high enough priority to fund training
- 9.7% reported that the LA criteria would not let them access support for SI related to CPD
- 9.7% reported that the school or setting did not have a need for training as there were no children or young people with SI at the moment.

A number of concerns were expressed:

The affordability of CPD generally and for SI:

“There are on-going concerns about supporting all children with SEN and I fear the reduction in specialist services as the LA has even further financial constraints. This would seriously impact on schools ability to support children with sensory impairment.” (128)

"Our project is funded by the 2 year old funding this has not risen in a number of years however our running costs day to day and staffing has become more expensive this means we have no additional funding left to pay for specialist training and can only join in free training if we can afford to cover the staff." (100)

The priorities within the setting or school;

"No teacher cover for courses. Not been offered CPD in over a year. Never been given information about SI training possibilities. Nursery sadly, not a priority in my school." (91)

"I am not currently working with children with SI, but regularly work with children with complex needs and feel class teachers do not have sufficient training in supporting children with SI and the skills involved are not sufficiently recognised." (263)

I need more training on BSL and language development. I cannot be spared from the Nursery and I would like it offered after school. (286)

"I would like a stronger understanding of CVI and optic nerve damage, pre-Braille activities and how best to support a child registered blind and also severe learning difficulties with language development." (169)

"Teachers are increasingly not being released to access training off site in our school due to reduced staffing levels. The Teacher of the Deaf requests that the class teachers attend the full day training course however school have (reluctantly) sent TA's/121 support staff instead due to the cost implications of releasing class teachers." (137)

"Training sessions need to be offered more often and widely. Although I have been on training and cascade information on, if there was more training offered it would be possible to send other significant adults like TAs or pastoral staff so they could have the training 1st hand. The quality of the training I had was excellent shame it has been so limited." (150)

The availability of courses for nursery settings was raised:

"In terms of availability of CPD courses linked to sight and hearing impairment, these are few and far between and often aimed at schools rather than day nurseries." (107)

Another put this in the context of larger priorities such as exams results taking precedence in CPD and the pressure this puts on staff if they want to do training outside of those priorities:

"Senior managers simply do not: cannot prioritise training about needs for needs of individual students. Pressure is on them to get exam results up overall and they prioritise what will have overall most impact Some staff are willing to stay for after hours voluntary training." (248)

There were also complaints that even where some training is provided this is not enough to meet the needs of teachers working with complex children:

"[I] have been disappointed with my school's attitude towards further training to assist in my support for the MSI child I look after. They consider that as she is leaving my training/course will not be of asset for any future pupils of similar disability who may attend the school." (62)

Or that there were not the right training opportunities in place:

"I want more training and will access it; there is no problem with access. There IS an issue finding the right training from sensory specialists." (302)

The availability of courses for nursery settings was raised:

“In terms of availability of CPD courses linked to sight and hearing impairment, these are few and far between and often aimed at schools rather than day nurseries.” (107)

Looking at some of the complexities around training, it was clear that even where costs are covered, there are issues for schools in being able to attend training offsite, and therefore it is important that the training can be transmitted across the school. For example:

“We are offered training for free but obviously have to pay for a supply teacher to cover anyone who attends. It is important that the person who attends is able to cascade the training to others at our site as we have a number of children with these needs working with a number of different teachers/TAs. Some funding support would be helpful so that we could send more people on the training or outreach training for the whole school at our site would be very supportive rather than individuals travelling to another site.” (301)

Another respondent pointed to the need to justify priorities given scarce resources and also that there were other sources of advice that they would use:

“Like everyone who is publicly funded, there is little money, and a great many hoops to jump through, to be able to access training. We advise on ALL SEN/D and there are probably other areas I feel more urgent for my CPD. If I were stuck, I would refer first to NDCS's excellent website and resources, and then to the Sensory Support Team in our Authority.” (214)

There were also complaints that even where some training is provided this is not enough to meet the needs of teachers working with complex children;

“[I] have been disappointed with my school's attitude towards further training to assist in my support for the MSI child I look after. They consider that as she is leaving my training/course will not be of asset for any future pupils of similar disability who may attend the school.” (62)

The low incidence nature of SI was also seen by a number of respondents as meaning that it was not worth schools or setting investing in unless there was a particular child in that setting:

“Training for specialist SI is offered less often in the LA. This could be because there are less of these types of need present within mainstream schools. My school has not had a pupil with SI for a number of years so training will only be given for current needs of pupils. Once a pupil is admitted to the school with SI there is support from the Sensory team in our LA which is a tremendous help as it is such a specialised area.” (88)

This was also connected to confidence that specialist support would be available from the LA if that was required.

One respondent also drew attention to the difficulty in securing funding for MQ level development:

“I would like to have been a QTVI or a QTHI but could not have funded this myself. I worry about the implications of teachers like me not able to go forward for such training and how this may lead to a lack of QTVI and QTHI at a time when children with these additional needs are more likely to be in a mainstream setting with little extra funding.” (217)

A SENCO criticised the content of initial teacher training and the SENCO award for not containing enough content on specific SEN for complex children:

“The sendco award content decision makers need pressure to make the qualification much more applied to the needs of children with specific conditions. I am an unusual sendco in that I undertook an MA in SEN arly in my career and have attended training in my own time at my own cost.

Although SEN is meant to be in teacher training it is minimal. Again, SEN is in teacher standards but no training. It appears to be something to criticise an individual teacher for in observations but no support is offered for classroom teachers to improve this.” (284)

There were also many positive comments on the support from SI services where this was available. These were typical:

“The boro I feel we work well, in this school, with the support services available to us.” (260)

“If I have an issue I ask and get a reply quickly. We co-operate to find solutions, pool information. Whenever I have asked for CPD it has been available; there are other regular trainings open and dates and information are sent through so I can invite relevant staff to attend. SI team are highly supportive and need to be developed and added to.” (83)

“The support for the child was wonderful, and really helped the staff to support him. His family have a strong bond with the setting as they felt the combined approach worked really well.” (210)

“I have liaised with specialist support staff, e.g. when I had a child in my class who was visually impaired and one who was hearing impaired. In both instances, and in other classes, I have received support and information specific to those particular students. We also had a twilight session to discuss how it feels to wear a hearing aid and to develop strategies to help hearing impaired children in our classes.” (151)

There were not specific complaints about the quality of the support or training once accessed. The concerns were all about access to training, level of training, frequency of training and availability of specialist training to the setting.

3. Implications of the Gap Analysis

3.1 Overall Implications

This report was commissioned to explore the apparent contradiction of SI professionals stating there was good provision of CPD for SI and the schools workforce thinking that there was not.

What is clear from the evidence in this survey, and from previous NatSIP research, is that there is still a clear offer and availability of support and training for SI to schools and other settings. This is mainly provided by LA specialist support services, but there is also evidence of a wider market of training and support from consultants, other statutory services and voluntary organisations. However in some areas the availability of this is restricted due to capacity issues in SI services and there are gaps in what is offered.

There is also no overall strategy promoting awareness of the particular significance of the effect of SI on the educational outcomes of children and young people. This could be addressed through NatSIP working with local SI providers in regional forums.

It is also clear that there is not effective demand across a significant number of settings and schools. This explains why the non-SI workforce thinks there are not enough CPD opportunities. This has a number of causes including:

- no resource to purchase the training in some schools and settings;
- there not being sufficient resources allocated to purchase SI training over other SEND needs or more general schools CPD on teaching;
- that staff cannot be released to do the training due to pressures on service or the cost of providing the cover for them to undertake the CPD;
- that some schools and settings are not aware of the need for more support especially for CYP with less significant levels of impairment;
- they do not have the knowledge to make assessments of what the needs SI CYP might be and therefore take appropriate action;
- or are willing to invest beyond basic CPD support due pressures on schools or settings budgets, time and capacity.

As has already been noted, these responses from the early years and schools workforce mainly reflect the experiences of settings that already work with children with SI. Even so, there were concerns about training gaps and access to SI training. In this context it is not surprising that the UCL Gap Analysis research found a significant level of concern about the availability of SI CPD given its focus was on all settings many of which would have no children with SI.

It is also relevant that, due to the very specialist and complex nature of need in this area, even in settings where there had been investment in training, there was often a perceived gap between what had been provided and the support required.

3.2 How to address this Gap?

Some of these issues may be addressed through organising training around workforce availability. The popularity of twilight sessions and short training and support sessions highlights this.

It would also be beneficial to focus on whole-school training and delivery of training across groups of schools, rather than to individual schools. Staff who have received specialist training then require the opportunity to cascade this information.

It is more difficult to address the low priority given to SI training and resource issues within the current commissioning model. As some specialist resources are being reduced as a free offer, and schools are unwilling to invest in them, there are serious concerns that teachers and support staff are being left exposed and that children's outcomes and wellbeing are at risk.

There are some examples of school clusters and MATs pooling resources and training needs to commission services and CPD. This may help address the issue of investing in low-incidence in those particular schools or settings. Working with national and local SI providers, the new regional SEN hubs could promote the role of SI services and offers. More could also be done to promote the NatSIP Sensory Learning Hub and resources to SENCOs and schools by DfE, and through other CPD resources to ensure wider awareness raising.

The feedback from SI services delivering the recently developed NatSIP 'Getting Started' training to local schools has been overwhelmingly positive about the materials and access to the local SI service. However the NatSIP evaluation also indicated that schools might not be willing to pay for this resource.

Where schools or setting do prioritise and undertake training, they value the support and expertise of SI Services, and find that it does help ensure better outcomes for children with SI.

Key areas for such support include:

- individual support and coaching to staff
- access requirements both with the built environment and the curriculum
- identification and strategies to support children with SI
- differentiation
- adapted resources
- the use of technology
- social awareness and skills.

What featured less, and may be of concern given the context of the reforms, is specific training on implications of the reforms for SI, such as EHCP planning.

It is also clear that the organisation of training on an individual school basis is not the most cost-effective way approach to reach the optimum number of teachers and support staff. Within a school, one-to-one coaching with staff around the needs of a particular child may be appropriate, but this can also undermine a successful whole-school approach if there is not a wider training strategy in place.

Many schools are also under significant pressure, so that even where training needs are recognised, they often do not have the capacity to release staff to address these needs. A high turnover of support staff and teachers will also contribute to the loss of knowledge and expertise, so training must be renewed.

3.3 The market for CPD for SI and accountability issues

These findings question the reliance on a solely school-led approach to CPD as the most effective way of securing effective support and up-skilling the schools workforce for low incidence SI.

Creating a market for CPD services, and relying on schools to commission this may work where schools have a large number of children with a particular impairment or SEN need, or a pressing immediate need for expertise to meet the needs of a particular child. However, for low-incidence SI CPD, it provides a disincentive to commission CPD where schools have previously had access to free CPD and support, have few or no children with SI, and limited resources to invest in CPD for very low incidence groups.

These findings also question the LA strategic role in ensuring, through the Local Offer, that schools and other support services have the capacity and skills to meet local needs. Moves to reduce specialist SI support, and therefore capacity for providing free CPD, can only put at risk future capacity of the SEN system locally to meet need, and will ultimately increase costs as more parents then seek EHCPs to secure provision.

In this context, it is ironic that reviews of SI services often justify reductions to services on the basis of being better-able to support CYP with EHCPs. At school level, it questions how rigorously schools identify the needs of their pupils with SI, and their capacity to meet them following the graduated response outlined in the SEND CoP.

It is important that schools are held to account by LAs for the training and support plans for children with SI in their Schools Information Report. This evidence raises the question how well and effectively schools are deploying their delegated SEN budget, and if they are getting the most cost-effective impact from the training and CPD they are putting in place. It is welcome that DfE are currently reviewing the cost effectiveness of the deployment of the delegated SEN budget and it would be helpful if a specific focus of this work looks at the appropriate use of the delegated budget for CYP with SI.

There is also an issue for the Ofsted inspection regimes. It is notable how often SI Support Services are praised in the Ofsted/CQC local area reviews, given the low incidence need addressed, and the low profile of the services locally with SEND.³⁸ It would be helpful, both in the area reviews, and in the new Ofsted schools inspection framework, if there could be more focus specifically on the provision of CPD to schools and settings as part of the focus on access to the curriculum for CYP with SI.

The results of this review suggest that where SI services are not being cut, or converted to a traded model, there is still the capacity and expertise in the system to support SI need, and some excellent examples of good working between schools and SI services. Where this works, schools

³⁸ See an analysis of Ofsted/CQC area reviews in NatSIP, Future of the Sector, 2016.

and other settings highly value the work of SI services. However, the relatively high proportion of schools reporting that they need more support, and the increasing number of services reporting that they have reduced capacity, brings in to question how sustainable the provision of high quality individual and whole school CPD is for the longer term.

There is a real danger that the system is losing its understanding of why SI support has, for many years, been centrally organised and provided, as this model becomes eroded by LA cutbacks, lack of effective demand (but not need) from schools and settings when asked to start paying for support, and a lack of knowledge of when schools need to ask for support.

3.4 Wider CPD issues for the SI and SEND workforce

SENCOs could play an increasingly important role in helping to co-ordinate high quality support as part of their role, but this is only likely to work if there is increasing training on SI for them in initial training and post qualification CPD. Given the low-incidence nature of SI, it is questionable how many SENCO course providers will be willing to pay for this, and how far schools will fund it post-qualification.³⁹ SENCOs should not be seen as a substitute for additionally qualified specialist SI teachers and other staff, especially when SENCOs currently struggle in establishing their own role with colleagues and are under constant pressure.⁴⁰ Schools and settings are not helped to understand what is required when there is a lack of clarity about training requirements for ancillary SI support staff (such as CSWs, Intervenors and Habilitation workers) and a lack of clear standards around communication and language requirements. There needs to be a better recognition that these skills form a fundamental part of access to the curriculum for CYP with SI.⁴¹ A first step to ensuring this could be review of the current qualifications, and the formulation of a clear training pathway, with standards established and promoted to schools, settings and training providers.

This analysis also suggests that the development of CPD in schools and other settings for complex and low-incidence SI should not try to replicate specialist expertise, but rather to equip the workforce with enough understanding and knowledge to be able to make the best use of SI specialist and advisory teachers by working together in partnership. However, if the specialist SI teacher workforce is being cut further, this suggests that capacity issues may become far more acute in the future, and that the schools workforce may not be able to get the support it requires.

³⁹ See NatSIP evaluation of its SENCO training offer. NatSIP, 2019.

⁴⁰ See Curran, H., Moloney, H., Heavey, A., Boddison. Nasen/Bath University/National Teaching Union, 2018. It's about time: The impact of SENCO workload on the professional and the school "only 27% of SENCOs stating that they felt their role was understood by colleagues". P7.

⁴¹ NatSIP, 2015. Feasibility Study into National Occupational Standards for Communication Support Workers working with children and young people in education.

Appendix 1.

The online survey ran for a period of just over two weeks in March 2019, limited by the time constraints of the project.

Time constraints also determined how non SI professionals were recruited to the survey, mainly through known links with SI services.

The survey was promoted to SI networks through the NatSIP website, the Head of Services Forum, BATOD and VIEW. It was also promoted specifically at the BATOD and VIEW conferences.

There were two versions of the survey one for SI professionals and one for non SI professionals working in Nursery and School Settings. The survey may not be representative of schools more generally, as in most cases the respondents had a CYP with SI within their setting. While this clearly limits the comparisons that can be made with the wider schools network it is also helpful, to the extent that we know a training offer would be available, or have been made, and therefore this allowed us to see how far these offers were taken up or found to be relevant.

Appendix 2. Other sources.

The Future of the Sector NatSIP 2016. Brian Lamb <https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/future-of-the-sector/1270-future-of-the-sector-report>

Analysis of a number of trends in contracting and commissioning of SI services, recruitment of SI professionals, provision of services locally and views about how well SI services supported.

Methodology included:

- Consultation days which involved over 100 heads of services and professionals
- A survey of Heads of Service and professionals which had 62 responses.
- Literature Review and analysis on relevant research.

The research was then shared with a conference of around 70 HoSS who endorsed its findings.

Commissioning Guide and Workbook for Sensory Impairment Services. NatSIP. Brian Lamb and Michelle Allison 2018 <https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/future-of-the-sector/1427-commissioning-guide-and-workbook>

Commissioning Guidance and analysis to support HoSS in the new contract environment. Developed from a series of training days to HoSS.

Regional commissioning for low-incidence, high-need children with SEND Brian Lamb, Michelle Allison, NatSIP 2018. <https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/send-reforms-implementation-support/joint-commissioning-files/1421-regional-commissioning-report-mar-2018>

Report and proposals for a regional commissioning model based on working with a regional cluster of LAs in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, NHS England, Isos, and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) as part of a national innovation bid.

This work was further informed by a series of national events attended by over 70 commissioners, LA Heads of Specialist Sensory Support Services, providers of specialist provision from the independent and non-maintained sector and a range of national charities. This was followed up by interviews with a number of commissioners.

Framework for the allocation of communication support workers in education settings. NatSIP 2018. <https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/supporting-the-si-workforce/communication-support-workers/1422-csw-framework-report>

Feasibility Study into National Occupational Standards for Communication Support Workers working with children and young people in education. NatSIP 2015.

<https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/natsip-documents/natsip-documents/bsl-coalition/893-csw-standards-feasibility-study-2015>

Report based on interviews with 108 professionals in the working in this area, some of whom also took part in a focus group. The proportions of the sample were:

- Communication Support Workers (50%)
- Organisations employing or using the services of Communication Support Workers (15%)
- Others (35%) including:
 - Provider of training / awarding organisation for Communication Support Workers
 - Organisations representing users of Communication Support services
 - Professional Body / Representative Body for Communication Support Workers
 - Other

A full list of contributors is contained in a list at Appendix 1 in the report.

Nelson H (2017) The Engagement of Post-Qualification Teachers of the Deaf in Continuing Professional Development. Conference Poster. BATOD National Conference 2017 Positive Futures for Deaf Children, Manchester.

The Factors promoting and inhibiting the successful supply of specialist teachers. 2016.

<https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/supporting-the-si-workforce/report-on-the-factors-promoting-and-inhibiting-the-successful-supply-of-specialist-teachers>

A report based on a survey through online and face-to-face questionnaires, and one-to-one interviews with:

- 54 Heads of SI services
- 74 prospective TSIs in training
- 15 newly qualified TSIs
- 5 MQ providers

Training Pathways NatSIP <https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/training-pathways/1369-training-pathways-doc>

Checklist for service alignment with legislation NatSIP 2017.

<https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/natsip-guidance-on/checklist-for-service-alignment-with-legislation>

Checklist of all the statutory requirements relating to the provision of services for SI CYP.

RNIB/VIEW Response to call for evidence 2018. Sue Keil, Rory Cobb, Sarah Holton.

Joint submission to NatSIP call for further evidence on gaps in CPD.

RNIB Freedom of Information (FOI) questions on local authority education provision for children and young people with vision impairment in England: 2017. March 2018 Research Briefing Kate Flynn Research Officer.

RNIB freedom of information request to LA's on level of provision and specialist support.

NDCS Stolen Futures 2018.

http://www.ndcs.org.uk/help_us/campaigns/our_current_campaigns/england/stolen_futures.html

Analysis of LA spending and spending intentions on HI specialist support services with interactive mapping by authority area.

-- End of Document --

Funded by:



© Crown copyright (03/2019)

This document is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. For more details please see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>