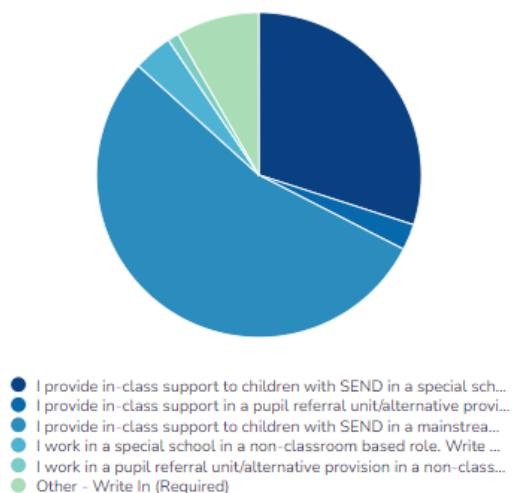


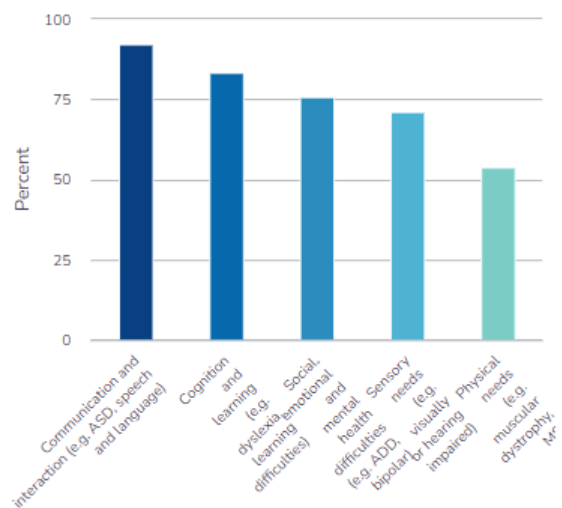
Special educational needs and disabilities (England) survey 2023¹

This survey was opened on the 21 September 2023 and closed on the 18 October 2023. It was sent in the general schools circular asking for all staff who worked with learners with SEND to complete. The survey was completed by 2806 staff with a further 22 filling it in partially.

Where respondents work:



Needs supported:



Over half of members provided in-class support in mainstream settings, with over a quarter performing a similar role in special schools. We received a smaller number of responses from members who worked in non-classroom based roles in special schools and alternative provision settings.

Members who worked in specialist settings providing in-class support were asked if they felt that the children were best served by this setting. Over half agreed that they were, 32% felt they were not whilst 12% were unsure. Amongst the comments, many respondents felt that the

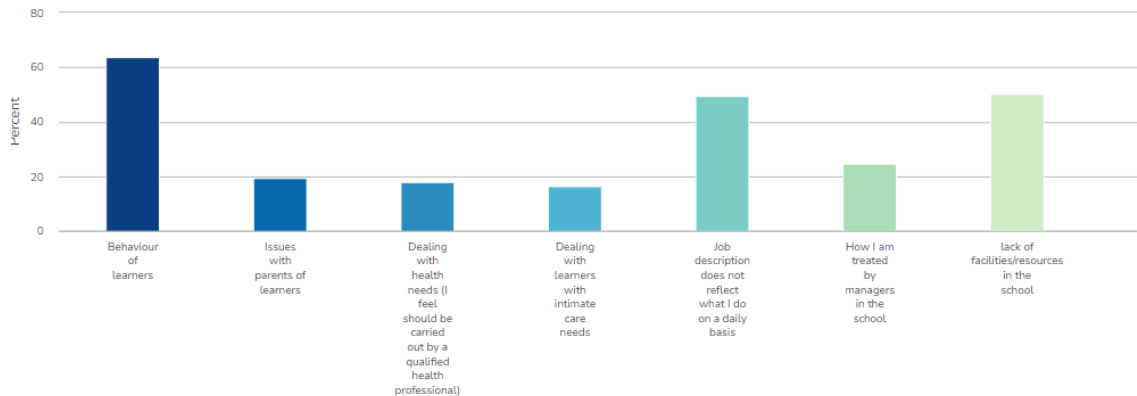
¹ <https://app.alchemer.eu/explorer/report-view/id/90611537/view/32313>

problem for these learners was the lack of staff, funding and adequate resources to be able to support them properly.

Concerns

Once again, the main concern highlighted was the behaviour of learners, followed by concerns that job descriptions did not reflect the day-to-day realities of their roles and a lack of facilities/resources:

Please identify the main concerns in your job from the list below (you can choose up to three)



Behaviour concerns

Of those who reported concerns with behaviour, over 9 in 10 respondents felt that the behaviour of learners made learning difficult/impossible for others in the class, with over half reporting that they do not always feel safe, particularly those in special schools (67%). Nearly 3 in 10 felt that the school's behaviour policy was not effective. Once again, many staff reported being the targets of violent behaviour. Hundreds of harrowing stories were revealed:

"I get hit on a daily basis"

"I have been pinched, kicked, hit in the face..."

"I have new bruises every week on my arms and legs"

Parental concerns

Of those respondents who reported concerns with parents, 4 in 5 felt that parents did not work in partnership with the school, just under ½ felt that parents were too demanding and a 1/3 did not like the way they were treated by some parents. Many of the comments reflected that some parents were abusive to staff, many do not understand the pressures of having to cope with the needs of every child not just their own and some expected staff to deal with issues that should be dealt with at home.

Healthcare needs

Of the respondents who indicated that they deal with the healthcare needs of pupils, over 4 in 5 do not feel that their pay reflects these specialist skills (88% in special schools) and 70% are worrying about the consequences if something went wrong (rising to 75% of staff in mainstream). Nearly 1/3 were not made aware that they would need to carry out these procedures when they were offered the job and nearly 2/3 feel that they shouldn't be treated as a healthcare assistant when they are an education worker. Many reported that many hours are taken up with non-education needs with one reporting that she feels lucky if she spends 25 minutes of a lesson actually supporting learning, due to the lack of school nurses. Many respondents pointed out that learners are presenting with ever-more complex needs and the lack of specialist provision is compounding the issue.

Intimate care needs

Of the respondents who deal with intimate care needs, over half were asked to undertake these tasks unchaperoned, which they feared could leave them at risk of an unfair allegation. Over

43% were not made aware that they would need to carry out these tasks when they were offered the job and ¼ are not given the correct equipment. Worrying, ¼ have raised their concerns with their employer, but these have not been dealt with.

Job descriptions

Of the respondents who indicated concerns with their job description, a huge 86% state that their role has changed but it is not reflected in their JD, or importantly, pay. Over ½ often feel they are expected to do a teacher's job and 1/3 are often asked to do jobs that other members of support staff should be doing. Staff told us that they are expected to take on break/lunch-time duties, many told us that they spend a lot of time dealing with behavioural issues – many of the problems are caused by staffing and funding shortages.

Management

Of the respondents who identified management as a top concern, over 4 in 5 stated that they did not feel personally supported by management, Rising to 90% in AP settings. This was not reflected in overall management, since just over ½ stated that the school is not well managed in general. Most of the comments suggested that management simply do not have enough understanding of SEND leaving support staff feeling unheard, over-worked and disrespected.

Resources

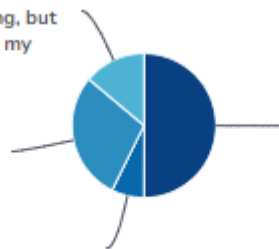
Respondents were asked for comments regarding lack of resources/facilities in the school. Issues were pointed out including lack of space/additional rooms, lack of equipment, lack of intervention resources and lack of staff.

Only ½ of the members we questioned felt they had enough relevant training to feel competent in performing their job role.

13.9% I have had training, but it is mostly irrelevant to my job role

28.8% I have had some training but need more to feel confident in my job role

7.3% I have had little to no training and do not feel confident in my job role



50.1% I have received adequate training and feel competent to perform my job role

43% of staff had felt pressured to undertake tasks that they did not feel confident doing.

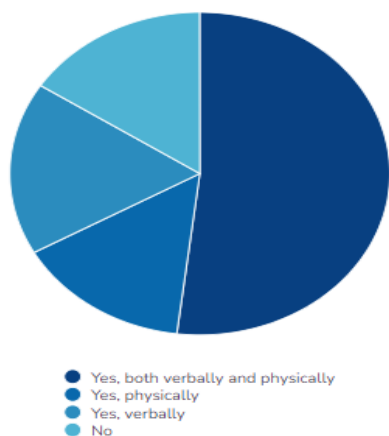
Of these, only 5% received extra training to give them the confidence to do their job, 10% refused to do the task and the remainder did it anyway, despite feeling uncomfortable. The comments showed that this resulted in children sometimes being put in danger (to their health), staff being put in potentially violent situations and children's learning being detrimentally affected.

Safeguarding

Nearly 1 in 5 respondents felt that safeguarding issues were apparent in their workplace, often due to children's behaviour and not enough staff to deal with violent episodes. 43% of

respondents had felt the need to make a safeguarding concern to their employer, but only 70% felt that the concern reported was responded to adequately by their employer.

Most staff reported having been assaulted in their job, with 2/3 reporting physical assaults.



42% of staff who had reported assaults did not feel that they had been dealt with adequately. Many staff commented that no action was taken at all, with others reporting that the situation was trivialised and staff were not offered any support.

A particular problem was noted in respondents whose job role was to provide in-class support to learners with social/communication needs or social/emotional/behavioural difficulties, across all settings. Here 87% of members reported having been assaulted physically by children, with over 1/3 feeling that reported assaults were not dealt with adequately.

We asked members if their school had a policy for preventing and dealing with violence towards staff in schools, but only just over 1/2 of respondents were aware of a policy and had read it.

Conclusions

This report highlights several issues amongst support staff working in SEND in England's schools.

Schools are under-resourced and the consequences of this are being felt keenly amongst the lowest paid members of staff. This situation has not improved, and in many cases is worse than when we previously surveyed staff who work with learners with SEND in 2021. There was a particular increase in members who reported behaviour as a main concern, from just over half of respondents in 2021 to approximately 2/3 in 2023. There was a significant increase in respondents who said that some children's behaviour made it difficult to learn. Staff providing in-class support in special schools in particular neither feel safe at work, nor paid adequately.

Staff do not feel supported, either by their managers or by parents. There was a significant increase in the numbers who said that they do not feel parents work in partnership with staff at the school. Many staff, even if they think their school is generally well-managed, do not feel personally supported by management. Further investigation is needed into why this may be.

To do:

- Support regions to launch violence in schools campaigns using the 2022 violence policy and the 2022 working with learners with complex needs guidance
- Develop a signposting resource for members with practical and legal advice if violence is a workplace issue
- Reach out to ASCL and NAHT to consider joint work around management of support staff
- Work with partners at UCL to further build the evidence base
- Look out for media opportunities to highlight the issues, particularly around behaviour
- Support campaigns to increase funding and resources for learners with SEND