

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND: EXPERIENCES FROM LIVERPOOL

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This research examines the extent to which the new legal framework governing the provision of education for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is working for children and their families in Liverpool.

Prior to Covid-19, a Liverpool-based empirical study was carried out. This involved:

- Conducting 17 semi-structured interviews with parents of children with a SEND; and
- A review of five casefiles from the University of Liverpool Law Clinic of parents of children with a SEND who had sought formal legal assistance in relation to their children's education, health and social care needs.

Following the onset of Covid-19, a nation-wide survey of 234 parents was conducted to ascertain the impact of Covid-19 on children with SEND.

KEY FINDINGS

Liverpool-based Study

1. Clear evidence of delay and non-compliance with legal duties on the part of the local authorities in finalising children and young people's Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans.
2. Evidence of lack of specification and quantification of service provision within EHC Plans once produced.
3. Evidence of illegal school exclusions, increased parental/familial stress, and lack of social care.
4. Systems-wide communication and transparency failures characterised the delivery of SEND services in Liverpool

POST COVID-19 STUDY

FINDINGS

87.8% of respondents revealed the broader devastating effect which Covid-19 was having on the health and well-being of their child and the wider family unit.

Declining mental health, increased anxiety, social regression, behavioural breakdowns, and a cessation to essential health and therapeutic services were recurrent themes within the responses received.

"It's not right that we're in a system where... the only way or potentially the only way that you get the result you want is to just go for it every day and fight and fight and fight and that seems to be very unfair when your daily life is looking after a child and loving someone so much and just wanting the best for them".

LIVERPOOL PARENT

RELEVANCE FOR LIVERPOOL'S CHILDREN

- 19% of Liverpool's pupils have a SEND (13,656 pupils) – the highest of all Core Cities in the UK
- 49% of children in Liverpool with EHC Plans are eligible for Free School Meals – a proxy for poverty (national average is 31.4%)
- Between 2014-19, 16% of children with SEND known to Liverpool Families Programme had been arrested
- In Liverpool, 59.5% of children with EHC Plans attend special schools (national average is 47.8%) – this raises questions about inclusive education
- In Liverpool, 1 in every 2 children (52%) resides in one of the most deprived areas nationally (around 48,000 children)

ABOUT

- > [Liverpool City Council's website](#)
- > [Email: cfc@liverpool.gov.uk](mailto:cfc@liverpool.gov.uk)
- > [UNICEF website](#)
- > [Email: cfc@unicef.org.uk](mailto:cfc@unicef.org.uk)
- > [Liverpool Health Partners CFC page](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Liverpool City Council has taken a number of significant steps:

- An Education Improvement Plan that includes SEND as key priority has been introduced
- An Education Improvement Board has been constituted to hold the Council to account for delivering on children's education
- A Director of Education has been appointed whose responsibilities include SEND
- Moving forward, the impact of Covid-19 on children with SEND needs to be examined and catered for

FURTHER INFORMATION

Children, Disability and Service Provision: A Liverpool/Merseyside Perspective (Policy report) January 2020

Written Evidence to House of Commons Education Committee on Impact of Covid-19 on education and children's services: bit.ly/3cnaQMb

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