COUNCIL FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan: key points; implications for CYP; some conceptual considerations

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NCB, CDC and SEC

- NCB a leading children's charity https://www.ncb.org.uk/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIluGYurOTggMVeo1QBh3p3gOSEAAYASAAEgJSmfD_BwE
- CDC its 'disability and SEND specialist arm' https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/about-us
- SEC is a sector-wide policy forum https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/about-us-0/networks/special-educational-consortium

Keeping the CYP at the centre

- Let's begin by considering the case of child N
- She is an 11-year-old girl in year 7
- Has struggled since starting secondary school: very anxious, doing well academically in some subjects but disengaged in others. Socially isolated. Some (low level) 'disruptive behaviours' at school and on some days refusing to go to school.
- Teachers haven't picked up her difficulties; parents don't know where / how to get support.

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan: drivers

vicious cycle of late intervention, low confidence and inefficient resource allocation

- The system is failing to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Parents' confidence in the system is in decline. Too many parents have lost faith in a system that is not sufficiently responsive to them, which is increasingly adversarial, and in which they face long waiting times… including accessing therapists and mental health support.
- the system has become financially unsustainable.

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan: main points

- National Standards
- Increased capacity of the specialist workforce (e.g., allied health such as SALT and OT)
- Standardise EHCPs
- create a three-tier alternative provision system, focusing on targeted early support within mainstream school, time-limited intensive placements in an alternative provision setting, and longer-term placements to support return to mainstream or a sustainable post-16 destination.
- There is of course, more… (e.g., local inclusion plans, enhanced mediation and more) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Inclusive practice, and the social model

- Social model: people are disabled by the structures of society not by their impairment.
- Inclusive practice (it is a contested term…) broadly speaking:

Ethos – pupils should feel safe, welcome and a sense of belonging

Legal – protections under the Equality Act 2010 (anticipatory, reasonable adjustments)

Guiding principles for policy and practice (e.g., behaviour; co-production)

In a school context

- Adapt the school environment to needs of all pupils.
- The ‘special schools question’: is it specialist support, or segregation?
- Specifically, the SENDAP IP says:
- By improving early identification and the quality of SEN Support, we expect to reduce the need for EHCPs because the needs of more children and young people will be met without them, through ordinarily available provision.
- Some scepticism in the sector: is this about cutting costs of high needs funding?

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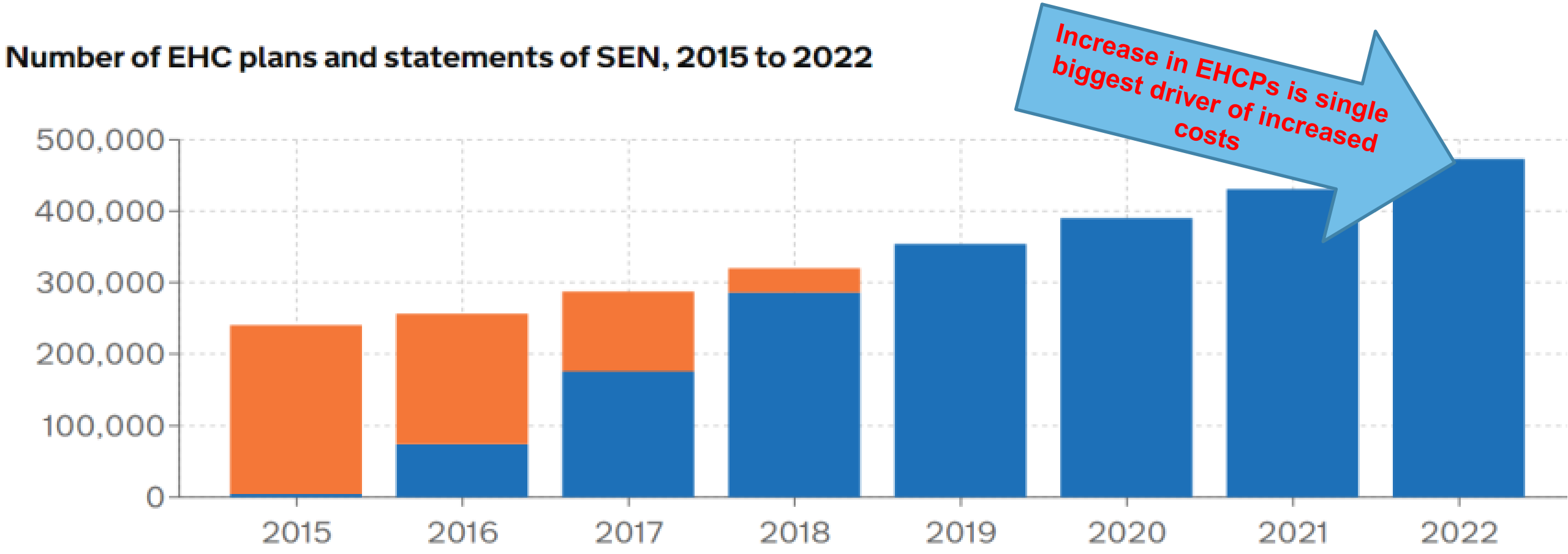
Number of EHC plans and statements of SEN, 2015 to 2022



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
EHCP %	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.7	4.0
SEN Support %	11.6	11.6	11.7	11.9	12.1	12.2	12.6

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In this metaphor, universal provision is the shade provided by the parasol… the wider the parasol (OAP) is, the more needs are met. Conversely, where a child is not protected by the shade (if not enough room under the parasol), extra provision will need be given; sun hats, protective cream, a separate shaded space would be the specialist provision.

A conceptual shift?

- ….shift away from a narrow focus on learners' special educational needs and special needs education as specific provision, towards extending and improving the quality of support for learning that is generally available to all learners.

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Back to Child N
(If the reforms all materialise)

- Parents will know what to expect to be available in school
- Early identification of need
- Quick access to specialist (e.g., CAMHS; SLT)
- School staff supported by tier one AP specialists

BUT…

- Too little too late? (timescales end of 2025; not enough substance on the teacher workforce or TA workforce development).
- NAS are calling for mandatory autism training for all teachers. Currently, there is only an intention to provide Practice Guides.
- Accountability issues remain; the sector believes that the current legal framework is good, the problems are around implementation.
- The AP system.

To conclude

- The Plan states: *Our ambition is to create a **society** that celebrates, encourages and enables the success of all children and young people*
- Amongst the challenges in bringing this about are resourcing after many years of erosion of funding; scepticism in the sector; and some very ambitious changes which carry within them a degree of internal tension (as in the case of the AP system).

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Thank you!

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