



## **Submission to NCSE in respect of Review of Special Education Provision October 2012**

1. Ref oral contribution at the Consultation Group meeting in May 2012 and subsequent meeting with officials from the Special Ed Section on 27 September 2012, the SNPA wishes to submit opinions in relation to the two policy areas currently under review by the NCSE in 2012.
  - a. **Development of an alternative resourcing model**
    - (1). There needs to be greater cooperation/integration at local level between the HSE assessment of need for pre school going children and allocation of ed needs supports by the SENO– avoid duplication of assessments. Particular emphasis should be made on the HSE assessment officer understanding the DES criteria for low incidence SEN - hence a reason for closer cooperation between HSE Assessment Officer and SENO. Could the SENO assessment report format be reviewed?
    - (2). There needs to be more focus on managing the transition phase between early intervention services/pre school to primary, primary to post primary and post primary to third level ed. Perhaps the key to improving transition would be to create linkages between the different levels by way of school partnerships?
    - (3). What does work well is dual placement, if it can be arranged for the first year of primary/post primary.
    - (4) Introduction of classroom assistants to bridge the gap between teachers and SNAs. SNPA are of the view that the classroom assistant is the “missing piece of the jigsaw” with regard to the provision of an integrated educational service, particularly where mainstream schools are concerned.
    - (5) Staffing levels and P/T ratios should reflect the complexity of needs that exists with special schools and special classes rather than school/class numbers.
    - (6) The use of the word ‘quantum’, in the documentation leading up to the Consultation Group meeting in May, to describe the level of supports is interesting, does this suggest a fixed amount? SNPA would prefer the use of the word ‘continuum’ to describe how resourcing is to be provided i.e. needs may change over the years and supports should be reviewed as a child moves through school and as capacity, hopefully, develops. Of course, needs may also increase in some cases.

(7) The basis for resourcing should remain the care (inc therapeutic), educational and **social** needs (behavioural support, communications needs for example). Not enough emphasis is made of the fact that the school and classroom are social environments where social skills need to be developed and practiced.

b. **Development of a Code of Practice in respect of the placement of SEN children**

(1) SNPA would regard the principle of parental choice as being very important and the following additional principles should apply to the placement of children;

Transparency

Balance (parents have to accept that placement will need to be balanced against the whole school community needs)

Fairness

Clarity in the functions and responsibilities of the people involved in the process

Effective and timely communications with parents.

(2). The Code of Practice should incorporate elements of the NCSE's booklet for parents. What would be important also is a clear explanation of the purpose and process of the educational needs assessments of the overall AON process. The Code of Practice should also give details of the appeals process when a school refuses an enrolment.