



Please find below comments from the [Royal College of Occupational Therapists](#) to the DUP Special Education Needs Pre-Consultation Paper.

The [Royal College of Occupational Therapists](#) is the professional membership organisation for occupational therapy staff across the UK.

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) is the professional body for occupational therapy representing over 33,000 occupational therapists across the UK. There are 1,256 RCOT members in Northern Ireland of which 1,083 are professional members (RCOT, June 2019). Occupational therapists in Northern Ireland work in trusts, across health and social care services, they deliver services across housing, schools, prisons, the voluntary and independent sectors, and vocational and employment rehabilitation services.

Occupational therapy is a science based profession. Occupational therapists work with people of all ages, who are experiencing difficulties through injury, illness or disability or a major life change. Occupational therapy improves the health and wellbeing of people through enabling participation in daily life which is made up of many occupations (or activities).

Occupational therapists consider the relationship between what a **person** does every day (**occupations**), how illness or disability impacts upon the person and how a person's **environment** supports or hinders their activity (PEO Model). Using this approach, we help people to continue or re-engage with participating fully in daily life, including work, social activities and maintaining roles and responsibilities.

Comments:

Core aims

We agree with the aim to ensure that all parents/guardians have access to the right education for their child.

We suggest that parents/guardians should access to a range of educational options, close to home so that they can be confident that the school/provision identified is the right one for their child.

We suggest that the third aim should include early recognition, intervention and diagnosis (if appropriate) to ensure that children have support to reach their full potential.

Themes

We agree with the intention to review current provision, the statement process and support and training for teachers/parents.

Current provision

We suggest that the consultation should consider the relationship between health, education and social care and its effectiveness in meeting children's special educational needs

Statement process

We suggest checking that the current statement system focuses on children's aspirations/ambitions as well as processes



We suggest the consultation process should review the involvement of health, education and social care in the statement process

Training

We suggest reviewing teacher training regarding special educational needs for teachers both pre- and post-qualification

Additional themes

Access to equipment – having access to equipment (such as special seating, moving & handling equipment) is vital to ensure some children with special educational needs are safe and achieve their potential. Some clarity about responsibilities for providing and maintaining equipment would be helpful.

Transitions – we suggest the consultation reviews processes and provision for children with special educational needs as they prepare for and make the transition from one setting to another and from children's to adult services.

Additional comments

We believe that access to information and support for children with special educational needs should not depend on diagnosis. Children and young people will benefit from early intervention (which is most effective when health services work in partnership with education) as this may prevent difficulties from escalating and requiring more costly, intense intervention later on.

Children with special educational needs are at particular risk of mental health problems, so we suggest that mental health provision should be included in the consultation.

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists recently published a report "[Occupational therapy – Unlocking the potential of children and young people](#)" outlining how occupational therapists work effectively with education to ensure that children and young people live full and happy lives, realise their potential and participate as valued members of the community. The report includes a number of best practice examples illustrating how occupational therapy can help ensure children and young people live full and happy lives, realise their potential and participate as valued members of the community. We would be happy to discuss our report and its recommendations further.