NATIONAL SENCO WORKFORCE SURVEY 2020: TIME TO REVIEW 2018-2020

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About nasen

nasen is the National Association for Special Educational Needs - a charitable membership organisation that exists to support and champion those working with, and for, children and young people with SEND and learning differences.

Their work ensures that all education practitioners are given the information and support required so that children and young people, particularly those with SEND and learning differences, can thrive.

From SENCOs to senior leaders, teachers to TAs, Local Authorities to leadership boards and beyond, they want to ensure that every part of the education workforce is equipped to understand, identify and support those with SEND and learning differences. Collectively, they can break down the barriers that prevent children and young people from participating in education.

nasen membership will provide up-to-date information and support for education practitioners to become effective, inclusive practitioners.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BERA	British Educational Research Association
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
EHC plan	Education, Health and Care plan
LA	Local Authority
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
NA SENCO	National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination
nasen	National Association for Special Educational Needs
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TLR	Teaching and Learning Responsibility allowance

Notes:

» The terms SEN/ SEND are used interchangeably within the report.

» As per the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) the term 'parent' includes all those with parental responsibility, including parents and those who care for the child.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018 the National Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) Workload Survey was launched and received over 1900 responses.

The findings from the research culminated in the report It's about time: The impact of SENCO workload on the professional and the school (Curran et al., 2018). The initial survey was followed up in 2019, with the findings published in the January 2020 report The time is now: Addressing missed opportunities for special educational needs support and coordination in our schools (Curran et al., 2020). The reports have been shared with the Department for Education and have influenced the work of SENCOs, schools and organisations such as nasen and the work of the Whole School SEND Consortium.

Now in its third year, Bath Spa University and nasen have continued their research focused on the SENCO role through the National SENCO Workforce Survey which was released in autumn 2020. Due to the exceptional time period during which the survey was taking place, the 2020 survey focused on capturing the experiences of SENCOs and their schools in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the SENCO role in general. The findings have been developed into two reports. The first report, focused on SENCO experiences during Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, was released on 19th January 2021 (Curran et al., 2021). This second report details the general SENCO findings from the 2020 survey and, where appropriate, compares these findings with the first SENCO survey, undertaken in 2018.

The purpose of this second report is to present key SENCO demographic data from the SENCO workforce survey 2020, relating to responsibilities, leadership and training. Equally, the report seeks to present findings related to how the role is facilitated in schools, including the time allocated to the role and the support the SENCO professional can access in addition to the impact on the role and the school, as perceived by the SENCO.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is focused on data from SENCOs operating in the primary phase and secondary phase of mainstream education, since the 2018 and 2020 surveys both contained sufficiently large sample sizes from these groups to make valid comparisons and to draw meaningful conclusions. The findings from other phases (notably early years, further education and specialist settings) have not been included in this report due to the relatively small sample sizes and the associated levels of reliability. This will be an area of focus for future surveys.

The 2020 survey opened on 24th August 2020 and closed on 5th October 2020. This report draws on 933 responses from participants who consented for their data to be analysed and collated as part of this research project, who also identified as a SENCO (or equivalent, for example inclusion coordinator), working in a **mainstream primary or secondary (or comparable phase) school** or educational setting.

KEY FINDINGS

1. The proportion of primary phase SENCOs receiving additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role has increased to 70% of SENCOs. However, the proportion of primary phase SENCOs represented on the senior leadership team (SLT) has decreased to around ⅔ (68%). The proportion of secondary phase SENCOs receiving additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role has increased to almost 78%. This corresponds with an increase in the proportion of secondary phase SENCOs represented on the SLT, which is just over ⅓ (34%). This indicates that a SENCO in a primary school is twice as likely to be part of the SLT than a SENCO in a secondary school, but they are less likely to receive any additional pay for undertaking the role.

2. The proportion of SENCOs citing workload as the main reason for considering leaving the role has reduced significantly between 2018 and 2020 at both the primary phase (52% to 27%) and the secondary phase (54% to 35%). However, progress in this area is too slow, with over a quarter of SENCOs in each of these phases still stating this specific issue as a reason for leaving the role.

3. The proportion of SENCOs completing the National Award for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordination (NA SENCO) is increasing and currently stands at 87% for the primary phase and 91% for the secondary phase.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The main aim of this report is to provide an update regarding the current SENCO demographic, therefore recommendations for policy and practice have been reproduced from the 2018 report and are included within the appendices. In addition, this report makes the case for policy makers to accelerate progress in three specific areas where progress has been insufficient and concerns have been consistently highlighted across all three reports.

1. Providing SENCOs with more time, resources and support (see appendices).

2. Supporting senior leaders and the wider workforce to understand the role of the SENCO.

3. Ensuring that SENCOs routinely have the opportunity to influence strategic decision making (for example, by being a member of the SLT).
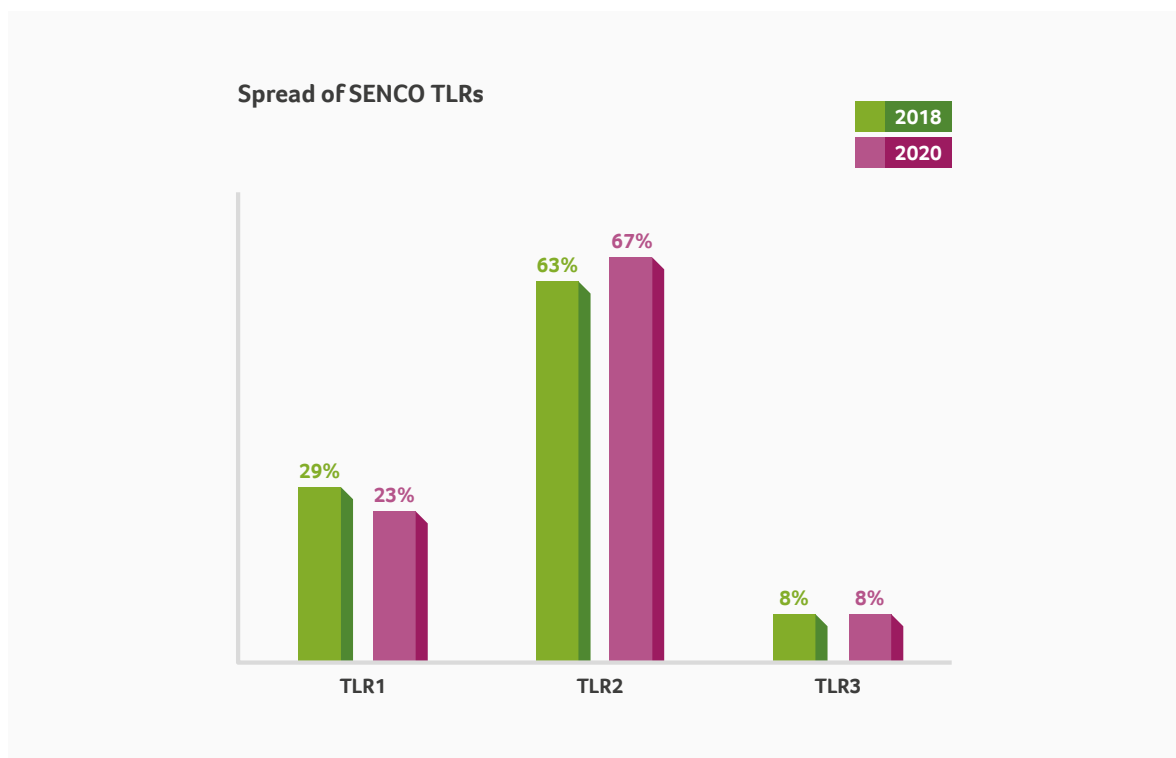
PRIMARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

SENCO Recognition and Strategic Influence

In 2020, 7 in 10 SENCOs reported that they received additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role. This represents a 9% increase from the 61% of SENCOs receiving additional pay in 2018. During the same period, the proportion of SENCOs who are part of the SLT has reduced from 71% to 68%. This could suggest that the SENCO role is being funded increasingly through Teaching and Learning Responsibilities (TLRs) and SEN Allowances rather than through the main leadership pay scale.

Analysis of the spread of TLRs used to remunerate SENCOs shows that TLR3s have remained steady making up 8% of all TLR payments to SENCOs. However, survey data suggests that TLR2s (already the most common level of TLR for SENCOs) are being increasingly favoured over TLR1s.

Spread of SENCO TLRs

| | 2018 |
| | 2020 |

	TLR1	TLR2	TLR3
2018	29%	63%	8%
2020	23%	67%	8%

PRIMARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Facilitation of the SENCO Role

Despite some positive changes reported by SENCOs between 2018 and 2020, the data suggests that there are still significant barriers which are likely to impact on the sustainability of the role. For example:

» The proportion of SENCOs who believe their role is manageable for one person has increased by 11% between 2018 to 2020. However, the current proportion remains low with only 2 in 5 SENCOs stating that they felt the role was manageable for one person.

» The proportion of SENCOs who are routinely pulled away from their role to undertake other duties has decreased by 3% between 2018 to 2020, but the current proportion remains too high with 75% of SENCOs reporting this as a challenge in 2020.

» The proportion of SENCOs with regular deployable support in the form of teaching assistants and/or specialist teachers has increased significantly by 17% between 2018 to 2020, but it is still the case that around ⅓ of SENCOs (31%) do not have access to such support.

» More positively SENCOS have continued to access support from a wide variety of sources, including from the Local Authority and within their Multi Academy Trust (MAT). 60% of SENCOs stated that they accessed support from a local network, with one SENCO stating,

"We have a cluster of 3 schools. I am also in the process of trying to set up a SENCO network in the locality."

PRIMARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Facilitation of the SENCO Role – continued

» The proportion of SENCOs with sufficient time to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has increased between 2018 and 2020 by 6%, for those with education, health and care plans (EHC plans), and 5% for those at SEN Support. However, the current proportion of SENCOs with sufficient time to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND remains too low at 29% and 19% for those with EHC plans and those at SEN Support respectively.

» The proportion of SENCOs who intend to be in the role in 5 years has increased by 5% between 2018 and 2020. However, the current proportion remains too low at only ⅖ of SENCOs. This suggests that there will continue to be significant churn within the SENCO workforce with an estimated 12% of SENCOs leaving the role every year.

» The proportion of SENCOs citing workload as the primary reason for considering leaving has almost halved, falling from 52% in 2018 to 27% in 2020. Whilst this is a significant reduction, it is notable that more than ¼ of SENCOs (27%) still cite workload as the primary reason for considering leaving.

» Despite pressures on the role, in 2020 nearly 4 in 10 SENCOs stated that they intended to be in the SENCO role in 5 years time. Consistent with the themes arising in 2018, SENCOs cited their enjoyment of the role and its rewarding nature for wishing to continue in post.

"I love the job and love making a difference to young people and their families."

"I love making an impact on children and their families by accessing services, interventions and support they so desperately deserve. I have a real sense of personal pride!"

PRIMARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Facilitation of the SENCO Role – continued

Whilst there are reported positive changes, it is notable that challenges remain with how the role is understood as well as with time and support to facilitate the role.

» SENCOs report that they perceive there to be no change in the wider understanding of the SENCO role from those in senior leadership. The proportion of SENCOs who feel their role is understood by senior leaders has remained constant at around half of SENCOs (53%). Similarly, the proportion of SENCOs who feel their role is understood by the wider workforce has remained consistently low at just under ⅓ of SENCOs (29% in 2018; 30% in 2020).

» The amount of time allocated to SENCOs to undertake their role has had negligible change between 2018 and 2020. The estimated mean average for the allocated number of days per week increased marginally from 2.11 days in 2018 to 2.15 days in 2020. Based on a 7.5 hour working day, this represents only 18 additional minutes per week.

» The recommendations in the 2018 SENCO Workload Survey (see appendices) were for SENCOs to have allocated protected time of at least 1.5 days per week to undertake the role. Whilst the estimated mean average of allocated time remains more than 2 days per week, the 2020 survey data suggests that around ⅓ of SENCOs (32%) currently have less than the 2018 minimum recommendation.

PRIMARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Facilitation of the SENCO Role – continued

» The 'minimum 1.5 day' recommendation was based on a smaller than average primary school. For an average-sized primary school (~260 pupils), the 2018 report recommended a minimum time allocation of 2-3 days per week. By this measure, it is estimated that 55% of primary SENCOs are not allocated sufficient time to undertake the role effectively. The 2018 report was also clear that in some cases, a full time SENCO will be required to meet the needs of the specific cohort of pupils.

» The proportion of SENCOs with access to dedicated administrative support has remained broadly the same (16% in 2018 and 15% in 2020). This means that around 85% of SENCOs are consistently without administrative support, which is likely to be a barrier to SENCOs fulfilling the strategic elements of their role.

» The proportion of SENCOs with support from a Deputy SENCO or Assistant SENCO has remained consistently low at around ⅒ of SENCOs (9% in 2018; 10% in 2020). This means that 90% of SENCOs have consistently been without support from a Deputy SENCO or Assistant SENCO, which is a potential barrier to effective succession planning.

PRIMARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Uptake and Completion of the National Award for SEN Coordination

The proportion of SENCOs who have completed, or are in the process of completing, the NA SENCO is increasing and currently stands at 87% in 2020, having increased from 78% in 2018. In part, this may be due to the decreasing proportion of the SENCO workforce who are not required to undertake the qualification because they were in the role prior to 2009. In the 2020 survey, this group accounted for only 8% of SENCOs.

PRIMARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Data Summary

SENCO – Primary Phase[1]	2018	2020	Change
SENCO Demographic			
Proportion of SENCOs who have completed (or are completing) the NA SENCO	78% (*n*=1032)	87% (*n*=574)	+9%
Proportion of SENCOs who are part of the SLT	71% (*n*=931)	68% (*n*=450)	–3%
Proportion of SENCOs who receive additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role	61% (*n*=805)	70% (*n*=462)	+9%
Facilitation of the SENCO Role (time)			
Estimated mean average of the number of days per week allocated for the SENCO role	2.11 (*n*=1316)	2.15 (*n*=662)	+0.04 (+18 mins)
Proportion of SENCOs for whom administration takes up most of their allocated time	74% (*n*=975)	78% (*n*=517)	+4
Proportion of SENCOs who believe their role is manageable for one person	29% (*n*=379)	40% (*n*=265)	+11%
Proportion of SENCOs who are routinely pulled away from the SENCO role to undertake other duties	78% (*n*=1022)	75% (*n*=497)	–3%

[1] includes the following mainstream school types: primary, junior, infant, all-through, middle, first.

PRIMARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Data Summary – continued

SENCO – Primary Phase	2018	2020	Change
Facilitation of the SENCO Role (support)			
Proportion of SENCOs with regular deployable support in the form of teaching assistants or specialist teachers	52% (*n*=685)	69% (*n*=454)	+17%
Proportion of SENCOs with access to dedicated administrative support	16% (*n*=206)	15% (*n*=99)	–1%
Proportion of SENCOs with a Deputy SENCO or an Assistant SENCO	9% (*n*=125)	10% (*n*=64)	+1%
Facilitation of the Role (workforce understanding)			
Proportion of SENCOs who feel their role is understood by the senior leadership	53% (*n*=694)	53% (*n*=353)	*No Change*
Proportion of SENCOs who feel their role is understood by the wider school workforce	29% (*n*=381)	30% (*n*=201)	+1%

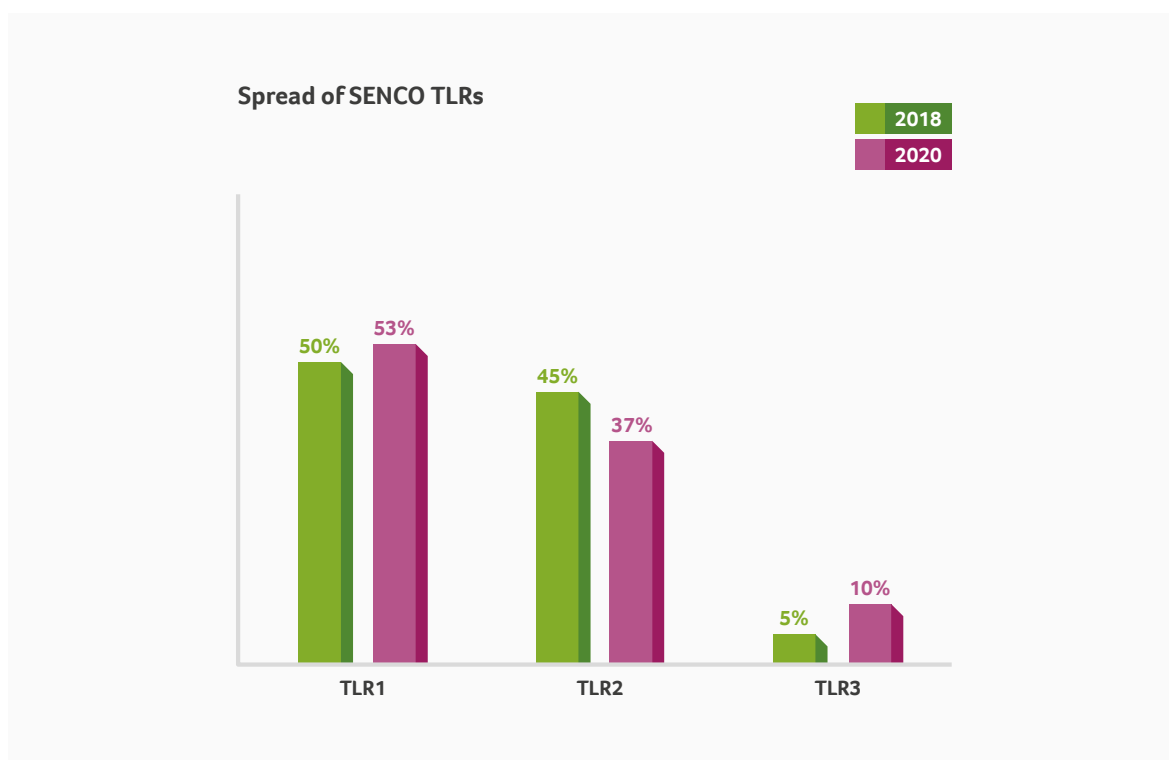# PRIMARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Data Summary - continued

SENCO – Primary Phase	2018	2020	Change
SENCO Workload and Associated Impact			
Proportion of SENCOs reporting that they have sufficient time to ensure that children and young people with EHC plans are able to access the provision they need	23% (n=301)	29% (n=194)	+6%
Proportion of SENCOs reporting that they have sufficient time to ensure that children and young people at SEN Support are able to access the provision they need	14% (n=190)	19% (n=125)	+5%
Proportion of SENCOs with a Deputy SENCO or an Assistant SENCO	35% (n=455)	40% (n=264)	+5%
The Future of the SENCO Workforce			
Proportion of SENCOs who intend to be in the role in 5 years	35% (n=455)	40% (n=264)	+5%
Proportion of SENCOs not intending to be in the role in 5 years citing workload as their most likely reason for leaving the role	52% (n=200)	27% (n=52)	–25%

SECONDARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

SENCO Recognition and Strategic Influence

The proportion of SENCOs in 2020 receiving additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role is 78%. This represents an 11% increase from the 67% of SENCOs who stated that they received additional pay for the role in 2018. During the same period, the proportion of SENCOs who are part of the SLT has increased from 26% to 34%. This suggests that the status of the SENCO role in secondary schools is improving, although there is still a long way to go since almost ⅔ of SENCOs (66%) are not part of the SLT.

Analysis of the spread of TLRs used to remunerate SENCOs shows a reduction in the use of TLR2s in favour of TLR1s and TLR3s. TLR1's remain the most prevalent form of remuneration for SENCOs, with more than half of all TLR's at this level, and their use is increasing over time.

Spread of SENCO TLRs

Legend: 2018, 2020

TLR1: 50% (2018), 53% (2020)
TLR2: 45% (2018), 37% (2020)
TLR3: 5% (2018), 10% (2020)

SECONDARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Facilitation of the SENCO Role

Many of pressures on the SENCO role in the secondary phase echo those of SENCOs in the primary phase. Despite the more positive changes related to pay and SLT membership, there are still significant barriers to the role being sustainable. For example:

» The proportion of SENCOs who believe their role is manageable for one person has increased by 3% between 2018 to 2020, but the current proportion remains too low at ⅕ of SENCOs.

» The proportion of SENCOs who are routinely pulled away from their role to undertake other duties has decreased by 1% between 2018 to 2020, but the current proportion remains too high at 79% of SENCOs.

» The proportion of SENCOs with sufficient time to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND has increased by 4% (for those with EHC plans) and 5% (for those at SEN Support) between 2018 to 2020. However, the current proportion of SENCOs with sufficient time to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND remains too low at 23% and 14% for those with EHC plans and those at SEN Support respectively.

» The proportion of SENCOs who intend to be in the role in 5 years has increased by 3% between 2018 and 2020. However, the current proportion remains too low at just under ⅓ of SENCOs (31%). This suggests that there will continue to be significant churn within the SENCO workforce with an estimated 14% of SENCOs leaving the role every year.

SECONDARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Facilitation of the SENCO Role – continued

» The proportion of SENCOs citing workload as the primary reason for considering leaving has reduced significantly, falling from 54% in 2018 to 35% in 2020. Whilst this is a significant reduction, it is notable that more than ⅓ of SENCOs (35%) still cite workload as the primary reason for considering leaving. Those who cited that they intended to stay in the role in the next five years echoed the sentiments of their primary colleagues, stating a 'love' for the role, particularly in terms of supporting children and families with SEND.

"Every day is different. [I] enjoy learning about students and supporting them."

"I love working with students and families to support them through education and build in confidence."

SECONDARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Facilitation of the SENCO Role – continued

Concurring with the primary data, it is notable that, despite the reported positive changes, challenges remain with how the role is understood as well as with time and support to facilitate the role.

» There has been no significant change in the wider understanding of the SENCO role from those in senior leadership. The proportion of SENCOs who feel their role is understood by senior leaders has remained constant at around a quarter of SENCOs (27% in 2018; 25% in 2020). Similarly, the proportion of SENCOs who feel their role is understood by the wider workforce has remained consistently low at 18% in 2018 and 17% in 2020).

» The amount of time allocated to SENCOs to undertake their role has increased marginally between 2018 and 2020. The estimated mean average for the allocated number of days per week increased from 2.20 days in 2018 to 2.32 days in 2020. Based on a 7.5 hour working day, this represents less than 1 hour of additional time per week (54 minutes).

» The recommendations in the 2018 SENCO Workload Survey (see appendices) were for SENCOs to have allocated protected time of at least 1.5 days per week to undertake the role. Whilst the estimated mean average of allocated time remains more than 2 days per week, the 2020 survey data suggests that more than one quarter of SENCOs (28%) currently have less than the 2018 recommendation of 1.5 days per week.

» The 'minimum 1.5 day' recommendation was based on a smaller than average primary school. For an average-sized secondary school (~910 pupils), the 2018 report recommended a minimum time allocation of 3-4 days per week. By this measure, it is estimated that 70% of secondary SENCOs are not allocated sufficient time to undertake the role effectively. The 2018 report was also clear that in some cases, a full time SENCO will be required to meet the needs of the specific cohort of pupils.

SECONDARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Facilitation of the SENCO Role – continued

There are three distinct areas in which SENCOs in the secondary phase have access to significantly enhanced support in comparison to SENCOs in the primary phase:

» In 2018, SENCOs in the secondary phase were already more than three times more likely to receive support from a Deputy SENCO or Assistant SENCO than SENCOs in the primary phase (31% vs 9%). Whilst the level of such support has stayed broadly the same for SENCOs in the primary phase, it has significantly increased for SENCOs in the secondary phase, with ⅖ of SENCOs now having access to a Deputy SENCO or Assistant SENCO.

» Similarly, in 2018, SENCOs in secondary phase were already around three times more likely to have access to dedicated administrative support then SENCOs in the primary phase (46% vs 16%). By 2020, this gap had widened further with almost half all SENCOs (49%) in the secondary phase having access to dedicated administrative support compared to 15% for SENCOs in the primary phase.

» The proportion of SENCOs with regular deployable support in the form of teaching assistants and/or specialist teachers has increased significantly by 13% between 2018 to 2020 but, in contrast to SENCOs in the primary phase (69%), almost all SENCOs in the secondary phase (99%) have access to such support.

SECONDARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Uptake and Completion of the National Award for SEN Coordination

The proportion of SENCOs who have completed, or are in the process of completing, the NA SENCO is increasing and currently stands at 91% in 2020, having increased from 80% in 2018. In part, this may be due to the decreasing proportion of the SENCO workforce who are not required to undertake the qualification because they were in the role prior to 2009. In the 2020 survey, this group accounted for only 6% of SENCOs.

SECONDARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Data Summary

SENCO – Secondary Phase[2]	2018	2020	Change
SENCO Demographic			
Proportion of SENCOs who have completed (or are completing) the NA SENCO	80% (*n*=400)	91% (*n*=247)	+11%
Proportion of SENCOs who are part of the SLT	26% (*n*=132)	34% (*n*=92)	+8%
Proportion of SENCOs who receive additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role	67% (*n*=334)	78% (*n*=211)	+11%
Facilitation of the SENCO Role (time)			
Estimated mean average of the number of days per week allocated for the SENCO role	2.20 (*n*=496)	2.32 (*n*=271)	+0.12 (+54 mins)
Proportion of SENCOs for whom administration takes up most of their allocated time	60% (*n*=299)	63% (*n*=170)	+3%
Proportion of SENCOs who believe their role is manageable for one person	17% (*n*=87)	20% (*n*=53)	+3%
Proportion of SENCOs who are routinely pulled away from the SENCO role to undertake other duties	80% (*n*=400)	79% (*n*=213)	–1%

[2] includes the following mainstream school types: secondary, all-through, middle, upper, 6th form.

SECONDARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Data Summary – continued

SENCO – Secondary Phase	2018	2020	Change
Facilitation of the SENCO Role (support)			
Proportion of SENCOs with regular deployable support in the form of teaching assistants or specialist teachers	86% (*n*=431)	99% (*n*=267)	+13%
Proportion of SENCOs with access to dedicated administrative support	46% (*n*=228)	49% (*n*=134)	+3%
Proportion of SENCOs with a Deputy SENCO or an Assistant SENCO	31% (*n*=155)	40% (*n*=108)	+9%
Facilitation of the Role (workforce understanding)			
Proportion of SENCOs who feel their role is understood by the senior leadership	27% (*n*=134)	25% (*n*=67)	–2%
Proportion of SENCOs who feel their role is understood by the wider school workforce	18% (*n*=91)	17% (*n*=45)	–1%

SECONDARY PHASE: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Data Summary – continued

SENCO – Secondary Phase	2018	2020	Change
SENCO Workload and Associated Impact			
Proportion of SENCOs reporting that they have sufficient time to ensure that children and young people with EHC plans are able to access the provision they need	19% (*n*=96)	23% (*n*=61)	+4%
Proportion of SENCOs reporting that they have sufficient time to ensure that children and young people at SEN Support are able to access the provision they need	9% (*n*=47)	14% (*n*=37)	+5%
The Future of the SENCO Workforce			
Proportion of SENCOs who intend to be in the role in 5 years	28% (*n*=142)	31% (*n*=83)	+3%
Proportion of SENCOs not intending to be in the role in 5 years citing workload as their most likely reason for leaving the role	54% (*n*=91)	35% (*n*=38)	–19%

IMPLICATIONS OVER TIME

Context and Modelling Assumptions

Given the changes that have been observed between 2018 and 2020, there is an opportunity to consider the implications of change over time. It is noted that in projecting changes into the future a significant number of assumptions are made, including that change happens linearly and that there is little or no impact from external factors. It is particularly important to consider the wider context of the 2020 survey, notably the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Such assumptions are, of course, a gross over-simplification of the reality. Nevertheless, such projections can be useful in shaping wider understanding of the potential implications of maintaining the status-quo.

For the purposes of this report, potential future projections have been considered in two key areas: protected time for SENCOs and, by extension, meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.

IMPLICATIONS OVER TIME

Forward Projections

1. In 2019, the House of Commons Education Committee published a report on SEND in which it recommended that the Department for Education (DfE) should appoint an independent reviewer to examine the cost implications of requiring all schools to have a full-time dedicated SENCO. Given the negligible increases in time allocation for SENCOs between 2018 and 2020 (18 minutes per week and 54 minutes per week for the primary and secondary phase respectively), based on the current trajectory it would take almost 150 years (primary) and more than 40 years (secondary) at this rate of change for all SENCOs to become full-time. Therefore, intervention is needed in the form of government policy to accelerate progress in this area.

2. It is clear from both the 2018 and 2020 SENCO surveys that SENCOs do not have sufficient time to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. Based on the pace of progress between 2018 and 2020, it will take almost 25 years (primary) and almost 40 years (secondary) for SENCOs to be allocated sufficient time to meet the needs of all children and young people with EHC plans. Worse still, it will take more than 30 years (primary) and almost 35 years (secondary) for SENCOs to be allocated sufficient time to meet the needs of all children and young people at SEN Support. During this time, millions of children and young people with SEND risk missing out on vital support.

APPENDIX 1
Recommendations reproduced from the first SENCO survey 2018

Recommendations: For Department for Education

» The SENCO role should have legally protected time to enable SENCOs to effectively manage the demands of the role. This should be in addition to time allocated to other responsibilities which the SENCO may hold.

» Further work should be undertaken to ascertain a minimum time requirement to enable SENCOs to effectively execute the role. Factors including the proportion of identified SEN within the school, the size of school and geographical location should all be considered as part of this research.

» However SENCOs should have, as a minimum, 1 ½ days per week allocated to the role. In some cases it will be appropriate for SENCOs to have a full, non-contact timetable, depending on the specific circumstances of the school.

» A SENCO specific strand should be incorporated within the DfE Workload Project.

» Further guidance, in addition to the SEND Code of Practice, should be developed and disseminated to school leaders and governing bodies regarding the responsibilities of the SENCO role and how this can be facilitated in various school settings, including Multi-Academy Trusts. This should be based on further research which takes into account recent wider systemic changes to the educational system and should also include guidance regarding the leadership and status of the role, and related pay.

» To enable timely and effective communication with SENCOs, as well as providing a platform for review of SENCO workload, recruitment and retention, it is recommended that the January census is utilised as a tool through which SENCO data can be collected, including the name and email of the SENCO and whether they have completed the National Award for SEN Coordination.

» A thought leadership session should be convened to enable wider stakeholders to engage with the issues identified within this report.

APPENDIX 1
Recommendations reproduced from the first SENCO survey 2018

Recommendations: For Senior Leaders within schools

» Currently SENCOs do not have legally protected time, yet this research illustrates the impact on the professional and the school if there is insufficient time to fulfil the role. Therefore, we call upon school leaders and governing bodies to make a pledge to protect SENCO time in their schools.

» SENCOs who are seeking to leave the role are citing workload as a primary reason. SENCOs are also lacking time to adequately reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of provision in their settings. The financial cost of these factors is high. Therefore, we recommend that senior leaders review the SENCO role in terms of time and support to encourage experienced SENCOs to remain in post.

» We recommend that senior leaders review the responsibilities of the SENCO role and share this with the governing body and wider staff to raise the profile, and understanding, of the SENCO role. A focus should be on the coordination nature of the role, with an emphasis on 'every teacher is a teacher of learners with SEN'.

» Head teachers should structure and protect the SENCO role to afford the SENCO the necessary status and seniority to influence school policy at strategic level.

» Consideration should be given to how schools can work with their SENCO to build capacity, distribute responsibility and enable support. Where funding/resourcing allows, it is recommended that the development of a team around the SENCO, for example through department SEN champions, assistant SENCO support, administrative support and/or wider SEN teams, is given consideration as a way in which immediate additional support can be provided for the SENCO and, as a consequence, improve outcomes for children and young people with SEN.

APPENDIX 1
Recommendations reproduced from the first SENCO survey 2018

Recommendations: For SENCOs

» Share the findings of this report with your head teacher/line manager, governing body and other colleagues as appropriate.

» In light of the above, review your job description with your head teacher and SEN governor with a view to determining the amount of protected time you require to facilitate your role.

» Join a professional community of SENCOs, for example nasen. There are also a number of active social media groups which can lend virtual support.

» Consider developing your own support networks both in and out of school. This may include support from within your Multi-academy Trust, your cluster of schools or from within the Local Authority. You can also find out what support your union can offer.

APPENDIX 2

Research procedures

The survey was developed in two parts. The first part of the survey repeated previously asked questions from the first survey in 2018 which pertained to the SENCO role in general. The purpose of this was to be able to compare data over three years. The second part of the survey focused on capturing the experiences of SENCOs and their schools in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The survey, as a whole, was piloted prior to release, with eight SENCOs taking part. Following feedback from the pilot participants, a minor number of amendments were made to the survey prior to its release. Amendments including developing some questions further, to provide greater clarity, and amending some technical aspects related to the options provided within questions.

The survey opened on 24th August 2020 and closed on 5th October 2020. The JISC online survey platform was used. The survey was distributed through various channels including:

» The National SENCO Workload Survey mailing list

» Information was sent to Providers of the National Award for SEN Coordination

» Social media, predominantly twitter and Facebook

» Directly to local authority Special Educational Needs Teams (GDPR permitting)

» nasen mailing list.

APPENDIX 2

Research procedures – continued

Ethical approval was granted by the School of Education, Bath Spa University, with the research following BERA's Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018). Prior to completing the survey, participants were asked to provide their consent for their response data to be used and reported only as part of this research project. SENCOs were made aware that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time, without reason up until they submitted their responses. No identifying information has been collected, either in relation to the participant or their setting. All responses to the survey have been contributed anonymously.

APPENDIX 2

Analysis of findings

The findings discussed in this report are derived from the online survey data gathered in 2018 and 2020. All data from the pilot studies has been discarded. For the purposes of the discussion and to ensure an accurate comparison, the data reported for both 2018 and 2020 reflects the views of respondents from **mainstream primary and secondary settings** (or comparable as highlighted with the data summary). Questions which elicited further responses from participants, through open text responses, have been thematically analysed and used for illustrative purposes.

APPENDIX 2

Reporting of results

The report details the responses from the 2020 SENCO workforce survey and, where applicable, data has been compared with the first survey undertaken in 2018. It is important to note that both sets of data have been reviewed for the purposes of comparison, notably SENCOs working in **mainstream** primary and secondary settings. However, whilst both surveys have been completed by practising SENCOs and we can examine the data comparatively, this must be approached with caution as due to the anonymous nature of the survey, we do not know whether participants completed one or both of the surveys.

While the majority of respondents reported that they were based in England (99%), UK wide data has been reported to include, where possible, representation of SENCOs working in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Note the 2020 COVID-19 report focused on SENCOs working in England only, due to the differing rules and restrictions in place at the time related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

APPENDIX 2

Participants

In 2018, 1940 responses were received. Of these responses, 1812 stated that they were working as a SENCO, or equivalent, in a mainstream primary or secondary setting (or comparable phase) and consented for their data to be reported as part of this project. 98.7% of the responses were from England. 52% of all respondents stated that they worked in a local authority maintained school. 5% worked in an independent school. 94% of respondents identified as female.

In 2020, 1044 people took part in the survey with 1039 consenting for their data to be collated for analysis and reported as part of this research project. Of those who consented for their data to be reported, 933 stated that they were working as a SENCO, or equivalent, in a mainstream primary or secondary school or educational setting. 100% of responses, from primary and secondary SENCOs, were from England. 44% stated that they worked in a local authority maintained school. 3% worked in an independent school. 94% of respondents identified as female.

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