

## C HAPTER 5

# Pupil referral units, outreach, advisory and support services

This chapter outlines some of the support that is available to schools, in finding ways of making the curriculum accessible to pupils who have a variety of special educational needs. The following types of provision are identified:

- Outreach work and services from special schools
- Pupil referral units (PRUs)
- Devolved services
- Centrally retained services

Although the services are discussed under these four headings, the examples show that there are many connections between them.

## The range of services available to schools

In the same way that it would be impossible to give an overview of developments across all types of mainstream and special schools, it is only possible to touch on some of the ways that support to schools is changing, in terms of who is delivering it and how it is being provided. At one time, local authorities were responsible for delivering most of the services schools needed to support them in their role, including the education of pupils with special educational needs. Now, although pupils with SEN remain one of the responsibilities of local authorities, services may be commissioned by them, rather than delivered directly. For instance, the increasing emphasis on a dual role for special schools has seen a growth in the number of outreach services from these schools, as one way of delivering support. Pupil referral units (PRUs) are now managed in a number of different ways. However they are managed, they support schools by being a source of alternative provision, and may themselves undertake outreach work. As part of the move to devolve more money to schools, local authorities have retained fewer services centrally. Examples of all these different ways of providing services to schools to support them in the education of pupils with SEN, are discussed in this chapter, including the role of both devolved and centrally funded services.

## The background to changes in service delivery

In 1988, the Education Reform Act (ERA) brought in a raft of changes, including the National Curriculum, Ofsted inspections and Local Management of Schools (LMS). The delegation of budgets under LMS removed most of the budgeting and management aspects of schools from local authority control and the effects were far-reaching. One of the consequences of schools handling their own budgets was that local education authorities (LEAs as they were then), that had very large services found them harder to maintain, while the services that went out to delegation in the early days found it difficult to adjust to a totally new situation where they had to remain viable by charging schools. As schools had a degree of freedom over how they chose to spend their money, many services did not survive, or carried on in a much reduced form. At that time, the future for support services looked very uncertain.

In 2000, the DfEE (as it was then) published *The Role of the Local Education Authority*, which explained the role of the LEA in the following terms:

*We believe that education authorities have precise and limited functions. It is not their role to run or intervene in schools, except those which are in danger of, or have fallen into, special measures or serious weaknesses: nor should they seek to provide directly all education services in their areas. Rather their job is to provide certain specific planning and support functions which are essential to guarantee adequate school provision. (DfEE, 2000: paragraph 4)*

So a more open market for school services was encouraged, with schools deciding which one offered best value and was the most cost effective provider from a range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Within this changing context for local education authorities however, SEN provision remained one of the duties that LEAs could not pass on to individual schools, so LEAs were expected to continue to run:

*high quality education psychology and support teaching services, linking with social and health services and planning – often across authorities – the use of scarce resources so that individual children can benefit from coordinated provision through their school. (DfEE, 2000: paragraph 13a)*

The *Report of the Special Schools Working Group* (2003), gave an overview of how specialist support and advice to schools was being delivered:

*Local authorities have historically played an important role in providing this through the educational psychology service, behaviour support teams, and teams of specialist teachers. The ways of providing support vary. Some local authorities have large central teams, many have delegated resources enabling schools to 'buy back' support, and some fund outreach services provided by special schools and voluntary sector organisations. (DfES, 2003: paragraph 2.34)*

The Children Act (2004) underlined this move to make local authorities, in their new form as Children's Services, *commissioners* of services, including drawing on the expertise of the private and voluntary sectors, with services transforming themselves into centres of expertise to advise and support schools in making provision. At the same time, there was also a growing realisation, both locally and nationally, that support services represented a valuable educational asset. Some services have built on this to develop their expertise to cover particular aspects, such as low incidence needs, ASD and severe dyslexia/dyspraxia.

In its *Response to the Education and Skills Committee Report on Special Educational Needs* (2006) the government wrote that:

*Services may be centrally run, provided by special schools on outreach or through mainstream schools working in partnership with Pupil Referral Units and special schools. But the government is clear that such services must be provided if we are to increase access for staff to specialist advice and support. (paragraph 33)*

This sums up how services have moved from being provided largely by local authorities to a situation where there are many providers. A further source of support may, in future, be delivered through the Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) mentioned in the last chapter. Pump priming is available for 2006–07 and again for 2007–08 for these to be established, in collaboration with the Regional Partnerships (formerly known as the SEN Regional Partnerships).

### Questions for reflection

- Do you think it has been helpful for schools to decide which services to buy in?
- Do you see any dangers in schools and governing bodies making the decisions?
- Do you know what services are available in your area and does the system for providing them work well or not?

## Services run by special schools

As mentioned in previous chapters, the government's SEN Strategy, *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (2004), clarified that special schools should have a dual role: educating some of the pupils with the most complex needs and working closely with local schools to support them in their work with pupils who have SEN. In October 2005, the DfES launched a consultation paper entitled, *Draft Standards for SEN Support and Outreach Services*, which brings together common standards for SEN Advisory and Support Services, including outreach services from both special and mainstream schools. It is the first time that standards for these services have been laid down. Taking into consideration some of the work that had been done in this area, the DfES (2005b) suggested the following four headings:

- 1 The service to have a clear purpose which takes into account other provision in the area and the needs of particular schools and pupils
- 2 The service has experienced, well-qualified staff to deliver a high quality service
- 3 Services are led and managed to promote change in schools
- 4 Pupils and parents are fully involved in the development of services

While the outcome of this consultation is still awaited, the need to have quality assurance, as services multiply and diversify, is very clear. The title of the consultation paper reflects that of an Ofsted report in 2005, *Inclusion: The Impact of LEA Support and Outreach Services*, which also brought together support services and outreach, indicating a rise in the status of outreach, from a service that has been delivered for many years mainly on an ad hoc basis, to being seen as an integral part of the continuum of support to be offered to schools.

While some special schools are just beginning outreach work, others have run outreach services for a considerable time. The Ofsted report, *Inclusion: Does it Matter Where Pupils are Taught* (2006) said that:

*Special schools should collaborate and share expertise more effectively to develop specialist teaching in mainstream schools, with the support of the LA and in line with other services. (Ofsted, 2006: 5)*

It is this need to coordinate the work of special schools and other services available in the local authority that is sometimes left to chance, rather than planned as a cohesive service, within which all the support available to schools is delivered in a coordinated manner. As the number and variety of services grows, it becomes even more essential that they complement each other rather than overlap. There is plenty of work that needs to be done in supporting schools, but it needs to be integrated within a strategic plan. The 2006 Ofsted report goes on to say that:

*Special schools had a particular strength in carefully matching the skills and interests of staff to the needs of groups of pupils. But teachers in mainstream schools had better knowledge of individual subjects in the National Curriculum. (Ofsted, 2006: 10)*

The final sentence above is a useful reminder that when schools share expertise, it is of benefit to both sides. It is not as one dimensional as special schools doing a favour to mainstream schools by delivering outreach, but rather of that close collaboration being of mutual benefit. It is also the case that mainstream schools themselves are building up enough expertise in certain fields of SEN, to be able to provide support to colleagues. An example of a group of resourced primary schools working in this way is given later in this chapter (see page 101).

An example of two schools that were providing outreach services to the schools in their area long before it became as recognised as it is today are two schools in Hertfordshire. Colnbrook School, in the south of the county, and Woolgrove School in the north, are primary schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD). They have been delivering outreach since the early 1980s. Since 1996, they have also developed provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and this has become another aspect of their work in local schools. The outreach services grew in response to local need and were supported by the local authority. All teachers undertaking outreach work continue to be practising teachers in the schools, and have to complete successfully the authority's training for teachers involved in this type of work.

### **Outreach Services from two schools for pupils with MLD**

For more than 20 years, and in response to local demand, Colnbrook and Woolgrove's Outreach Services have developed to include the following elements:

- Working alongside mainstream colleagues in assessing pupils who are experiencing difficulties, and providing strategies and resources to support them
- Managing a special needs resource centre open to all local schools, with materials available on loan, and information on various disorders and conditions
- Using the whole school as a resource that staff can visit to observe in classrooms and to talk to teachers
- Organising courses and training sessions for teachers and teaching assistants, many as 'twilight sessions' after school
- Planning the transition of pupils into the special schools and reintegration programmes for those who are ready to return to mainstream education

A remark that is often made to outreach teachers is that their support on practical classroom strategies are particularly helpful, because they come from teachers who continue to be practitioners.

It became apparent from the case studies in the last two chapters, that special schools are reaching out to support mainstream colleagues in a number of different ways. The next example is of one of the special schools in Belfast, that was mentioned in Chapter 3, Harberton School. The school has developed a whole range of services to local schools, with the support of the Library Board (the equivalent in Northern Ireland of a local authority).

### **Services run by a special school in Belfast**

As well as being a special school for pupils with MLD and other conditions, Harberton has developed the following services to local schools:

- A diagnostic nursery for 8 pupils, to determine their need for mainstream, MLD or SLD placement
- A nursery support service to support approximately 20 three-year-olds at a time, who are having difficulties settling in to mainstream nurseries
- An outreach behaviour service to support up to 90 Key Stage 1 pupils who have been assessed as having BESD
- An outreach learning service to support nearly 300 pupils in maintaining their places in mainstream schools
- Units for children with reading difficulties that provide intensive support to pupils who have been diagnosed as dyslexic, including 13 full-time and 21 part-time pupils

Turning from Northern Ireland to Wales, an unusual facility has been developed by another special school that was also mentioned in Chapter 3. St Christopher's runs an Eco Centre, which is available to its own pupils, as well as to local primary and secondary schools. It is mentioned here because it also serves as an alternative form of provision for some of its own students from the school's behaviour support department, and for some students from local schools who are disaffected or not responding to the curriculum on offer, as well as for a few from the local pupil referral unit (PRU). Although not exclusively used by pupils with SEN, it has a particular role in providing a curriculum for those students whose behaviour is difficult to manage in a classroom environment, but who are responsive to an outdoor-based curriculum. This provides an active, practical approach to learning, and for some of the students, it has the added incentive that they can earn some money by learning how to grow and sell plants.

### **A special school's Eco Centre in Wales**

St Christopher's Millennium Eco Centre is in an existing quarry on the edge of the town and its work is supported by Tarmac, which owns the quarry. It is run by the school to interest pupils in the environment. The main theme of the Eco Centre is sustainability: sustainable waste management and a sustainable lifestyle, which is promoted through an appreciation of the environment and how to live off the land. Pupils have been involved in the project from the start and have helped to create an unusually varied, creative and productive Eco Centre. On site, there is a classroom and a café, serving hot and cold drinks, as well as snacks. The site is used by local schools and other people for the following reasons:

- As part of a business enterprise, including growing and selling plants
- For work experience and access to accredited environmental courses
- To learn about the mechanics of quarrying, recycling, tree-planting, fence-building, bricklaying, maintaining allotments and willow weaving
- To take part in environmental projects

About 40 people a day use the site, including adults with learning difficulties, as well as individuals and groups from local primary and secondary schools.

### **Points to ponder**

- Do you think it is a good idea for special schools to run outreach services?
- Should they run other services as well?
- If so, which ones do you think are most helpful to schools?

## Pupil referral units (PRUs)

Pupil referral units were set up under the 1996 Education Act to make provision for pupils who are out of school for reasons such as exclusion or illness. Pupils can be dually registered at a PRU and at a school. A PRU may be for one of the key stage age groups, for primary or secondary pupils, or cover the whole of the age range. The majority of PRUs concentrate on those who have been excluded or who are at risk of exclusion. PRUs are officially both schools and 'education otherwise than at school'. There are differences from other schools in the way they are run. They have:

- A management committee rather than a governing body, and this committee may manage more than one PRU
- Pupils who can be dually registered at the PRU and at a local school
- No requirement to cover the National Curriculum in its entirety
- Different requirements from schools as regards the premises

Although not all the pupils at a PRU will necessarily have SEN, many will have recognised behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), for which some will be statemented. There are concerns that the pressures caused by the curriculum in its current form and the degree and style of testing that goes with it, result in some pupils reacting adversely to the demands made on them. Because they find it hard to cope, or are unmotivated by what is on offer, they respond by exhibiting nonchalant, defiant or aggressive behaviour. The conflict between the standards agenda, with its pressure on schools and their pupils to perform to certain standards, and the inclusion agenda, is apparent to all, except perhaps the politicians.

Some PRUs are managed by the head teacher of a special school. Cuckmere House, a BESD school in East Sussex, has a PRU for primary aged pupils within the special school, and oversees two other PRUs for older students elsewhere in the county. The New Rush Hall Group in Redbridge is an organisation that works with children who have BESD in various locations. It is one of the first schools to be designated a special school with a BESD specialism. It manages a range of services in conjunction with the local authority.

### The New Rush Hall Group

The New Rush Hall Group works across a range of settings with youngsters who are experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The group is made up of:

- **New Rush Hall School** which opened in 1991 and takes 72 pupils aged 5–16 who have BESD. The vast majority are boys. Several pupils have a diagnosis of AD/HD or ASD, including Asperger's syndrome. Some primary pupils are admitted on a part-time basis
- The school's **behaviour support outreach service** offers support both to mainstream schools and to individual students, offering both curriculum and counselling support



- A **Key Stage 3 PRU** is on another site for 16 Years 7–9 students, who have been, or are on the verge of being, excluded
- A **Key Stage 4 PRU** is on two separate sites: a college site and a factory unit for vocational based work
- A **Tuition Service** which is an all-age PRU, working with those who are temporarily out of school
- An **adolescent psychiatric unit** with residential, day and outpatient assessment for up to 35 teenagers is also available and on-site education

The head teacher, John d'Abbro, manages the group, with the school governors and local authority overseeing the resources and services.

As part of the move to find fresh ways of tackling behaviour, and particularly reducing exclusions, from January 2006 all secondary schools have been expected to form behaviour partnerships. Some schools have already been working together in this way for some time. The Chesil Education Partnership (also known as the Chesil Federation) in Dorset, for instance, is a collaborative of 28 schools: 4 secondaries, 14 primaries, 3 juniors, 3 infants, 2 special schools 1 PRU, and an FE college, which has been in operation since January 2004. One of its aims is for greater inclusion within its schools, including an aspiration to reduce permanent exclusions to zero. In September 2005, the Compass Centre was opened by the partnership to provide a range of alternative provision for pupils at Key Stages 1–4, with resources provided through partnership with the local authority.

### **The Compass Centre**

The Compass is one of the larger PRUs. It caters for 111 pupils aged 4–16. Although a minority of students are school phobics or have already been excluded, the majority are either at risk of exclusion or have medical conditions. Most remain on the roll of their local school. The majority of the students are of secondary age. The Centre has existed under a different name since September 2005.

The Centre has one main base, but uses 14 other sites to provide a wide range of individualised learning opportunities. The pupils comment that they enjoy being in a place where their views are heard, they have a high level of individual attention and a greater degree of choice about the contents of the curriculum. They talk about the Centre being a more relaxed and less stressful environment than that of their previous placements. Although most of the students are low attainers when they arrive, records of what leavers have achieved indicate that the Centre has had a positive impact on their lives. Passes at GCSE, work-related learning and work experience placements stand them in good stead for the future.



### Points to ponder

- What do you see as the value of PRUs?
- Which pupils do you think benefit the most from attending this type of provision?
- Does your school or service have any connection with the PRU in your area? If not, would it be useful to form any links?

## Devolved services

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, since the local management of schools came about as a result of the 1988 Education Act, there has been growing pressure on local authorities to delegate an increasing share of their budget to schools. This has been given even greater emphasis by more recent legislation and documentation, including the government's *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: Ten-Year Childcare Strategy* (Treasury, 2004) the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (DfES, 2005c) and the subsequent *Education and Inspections Act* (DfES, 2006d), the *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2005d) and the Children Act of 2004. All of these describe a shift from local authorities being providers of services to commissioning services from other providers. One of the services that was at the forefront of the move to delegation was the North Lincolnshire SEN Support Service. Under its head teacher at the time, Tricia Barthorpe, it was one of the first services to become completely devolved, with all monies delegated to schools, and which succeeded in flourishing in an open market.

### North Lincolnshire SEN Support Service (SENSS)

The service was established in 1996 as part of the new unitary authority to support pupils with SEN throughout Key Stages 1–4 and to provide for 150 Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students at risk of permanent exclusion. All secondary schools in the town agreed to buy in to the service which made it viable, and with its position on the edge of a business park, SENSS was able to offer a wide range of opportunities to students who would otherwise have been in danger of having very little to show for their years in school. As well as improving their basic skills, a personalised curriculum was offered to each student to retain their interest and keep them motivated.

Having been at the forefront of the move to succeed in a climate of devolved funding, in 2006, North Lincolnshire Local Authority and SENSS pioneered *Procuring Services 2006–09*, giving private contractors the ability to tender under strict performance indicators, by which schools can judge which services are likely to be value for money.

Since 2004, as part of the North Lincolnshire policy, permanent exclusions have been reduced to nil at all key stages. In 2006, all Key Stage 4 students gained GCSEs, many at A to C grades, as well as a range of other qualifications.

## Primary Support Bases (PSBs)

Another approach to avoiding exclusions at an early stage, while coordinating support for the county's pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties in general, came about in Hertfordshire through developing an extended role for its 9 primary schools with BESD Units, now renamed Primary Support Bases (PSBs). This was done in the context of the authority's Behaviour and Achievement Strategy and in consultation with the PRUs, the BESD schools and the authority's Behaviour Support Team, which has a similar role to the national Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BESTs). In Hertfordshire, the funding for the PSBs is delegated to the resourced schools budgets and identified separately within their budget shares.

## Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BESTs)

BESTs were introduced in December 2002, as part of a national scheme for raising standards of behaviour and attendance in schools. These are multi-agency teams, that work in targeted areas to try to identify and support those whose attendance and/or behaviour is likely to cause problems. Most teams have four or five members of staff, such as:

- Educational and/or clinical psychologists
- Education welfare officers
- Behaviour support staff
- Speech and language therapists
- Health visitors,
- School nurses
- Primary mental health workers
- Social workers or family workers

BESTs are another example of the different services coming together to meet children's needs more effectively.

### **An Extended Role for Primary Support Bases (PSBs)**

In 1999, a new role was established for the EBD Units (as they were described at that time), as staff felt that they did not receive children at an early enough stage, but often after they had been out of school for up to 6 months. Assessment was long-winded and the pupils, their families and schools were suffering from the delay. A new post was created for the head teacher of one of the schools, so that he could coordinate and develop the role of the Units. Phil Hewett worked closely with the head teacher of a primary BESD school and with the head of a PRU for Key Stages 1 and 2, in developing this new service, so that it would complement existing provision.

As a result, the staffing at the PSBs was doubled, so that they now offer outreach support to keep pupils in their own schools. The Behaviour Support Team act as gatekeepers and decide which children should be allocated one of the extended roll places. Only if this fails to give them enough support are they given places at a PSB. BESD schools concentrate on those with the highest level of need.

This new way of working has meant that a town with the highest number of exclusions previously now has no children of primary school age being excluded.

### **Education Improvement Partnerships (EIPs)**

The many ways in which schools have been working together has been given further impetus by the creation of Education Improvement Partnerships.

#### **Education Improvement Partnerships (EIPs)**

EIPs were formerly known as Foundation Partnerships. In the spring of 2005, the DfES brought out a prospectus itemising the ways in which schools in a geographical area could form links to address particular issues. An EIP must be inclusive of all the schools in the area and set out its aims in terms of:

- Raising attainment and improving behaviour and attendance
- The personalisation of provision
- Delivering the five outcomes of ECM in all schools and through childcare and extended services

EIPs are intended to build on existing partnerships rather than replace them.

In the prospectus for *Education Improvement Partnerships*, the move to extend the ways in which services are provided is clearly set out, as the following two extracts reveal:

*Federations will be well placed to develop into EIPs, and a number of them already have contracts with their local authorities to deliver services.* Page 4

*Where an EIP is commissioned to take on functions previously delivered by a local authority, that local authority will devolve appropriate funding to partnerships, to enable them to deliver those functions. This, too, would be set out in joint agreements.* Page 7

This comes back to the point made previously, that all types of schools, whether individually or as a group, may provide services to other schools.

### Points to ponder

- Does your school commission services from other schools or, if not, would you like it to do so?
- Do you provide services to other schools and, if not, are there any services you would like to provide?

## Centrally retained services

Despite the amount of delegation of money to schools from the centre, most local authorities retain some key services, as part of their duties as regards children and young people with SEN. In some authorities part or all of the former local education authorities' functions have been taken over by private sector partners, such as Serco, W.S. Atkins, Nord Anglia or CEA, but certain services must be available to schools.

**Educational Psychology services** are particularly important to schools, as Educational Psychologists (EPs) are crucial in helping schools identify the nature of children's difficulties. EPs play a key role in undertaking the statutory assessments that may lead to a child receiving a statement. One of the problems with the statementing procedures being so laborious, is that the process ties up so much of the time that EPs would otherwise be able to spend in supporting schools more generally. Changes in the way they are trained will involve a move from a one-year master's degree to a three-year doctorate. This could create an even more difficult situation in schools, as there will be a hiatus before newly trained EPs are available to work in schools.

**Parent Partnership services** are statutory services, but are encouraged to operate at arm's length from local authorities. However, most remain part of the local authority, though a minority are out-sourced from the voluntary sector. Most services are attached to a single authority, though some may cover a number of smaller authorities. Their roles and responsibilities are set out in the SEN Code of Practice 2001. Parent Partnership coordinators provide support and advice to parents of children with SEN. Their role includes giving accurate, unbiased information on the options available to parents when it comes to their child's education. They provide a point of contact and general help to parents in navigating the complexities of the school system.

SEN advisers and SEN advisory teachers may lead teams or be part of a larger team of advisers who support school improvement. Their role includes working with schools in general to help them develop inclusive practice. Some may advise on the ways to support particular children. Peripatetic or visiting teachers may also be part of these teams. Specialist peripatetic teachers attached to central services work with individual children in a variety of settings and with a variety of needs. They provide specialist advice and support, including delivering in-service training (INSET). They possess detailed knowledge of particular conditions, such as sensory, or physical impairment, or autistic spectrum disorders.

In some areas, there is a move towards creating multi-disciplinary teams, as the drive to integrate services accelerates. Below is an example of a centrally funded service in Rotherham, which has many component parts. Social services is included in the team, and protocols have been developed for working with the health service through Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

### **Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)**

PCTs were established in April 2002 to take control of local health care, with strategic health authorities being responsible for monitoring performance and standards. PCTs receive their budgets directly from the Department of Health (DH).

### **Rotherham's Integrated SEN and Disability Service**

Since 2003, Peter Rennie, Head of SEN Support Services in Rotherham, has been working with colleagues to create an integrated SEN and Disability Service, which started to be implemented in December 2005. The Service is about to move, so that all the different services will be co-located under the same roof. The Integrated SEN and Disability Service includes:

- A service for hearing impaired children
- A service for visually impaired children
- An autism and communication team
- The children's disability social work team
- Residential care settings (for respite care) and the attached outreach workers

Protocols for joint working have also been established with the PCT and service level agreements (SLAs) set up for:

- a speech and language therapist working with the autism and communication team
- a school nurse adviser
- a moving and handling co-ordinator

Budgets for the component elements of the service have, where necessary, been disaggregated from larger budgets and will be either aligned or pooled from April 2007.

EVERY CHILD INCLUDED

As well as being involved in running central services for many years, Peter Rennie helped to found SENSSA, the SEN Support Services Association.

## SENSSA

Established at the beginning of the 1990s, SENSSA is an organisation for all those who work in support services. They join either as individuals or belong to a team that has corporate membership. Its members work in a variety of contexts, including Speech and Language Therapy Teams, ASD and Communication Teams, Behaviour Support Teams and Learning Difficulty Teams.

Some of its members also belong to other more specialist organisations, but value belonging to an umbrella organisation as well, particularly at a time when there is more cross-fertilisation of services.

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This chapter has provided just a glimpse of some of the many and increasingly varied ways in which support to schools is being delivered. Support services, by working across all types of schools, help schools to become more inclusive, and by delivering specialist help to individual pupils, are a vital element in the creation of a flexible range of provision. As the number of providers in the field increases and the range of their work takes on a multi-disciplinary aspect as well, it becomes ever more necessary for there to be a strategic overview of what is happening on the ground. Local authorities may have become commissioners, rather than the sole providers of services, but they are best placed to identify where services overlap, or where there are gaps which need to be filled.

### Points to remember

There is a growing number of ways that schools are being supported in providing for pupils with SEN. There has been a substantial shift from local authorities providing services to their role becoming one where they commission services instead.

Special schools are expected to deliver outreach as part of their dual role, and are doing so in a number of ways. Mainstream schools are also beginning to provide a range of services.

While retaining some services centrally, local authorities have delegated much of the money for SEN support to schools, who have the option of buying in to the services they want.

### Final thoughts

- What centrally held services are available in your area?
- What other services does your school use?
- Are there gaps in the provision of SEN services?
- Are there ways in which you feel SEN support services could be better coordinated?



### Recommended reading

Department for Education and Skills (2005a) *Draft Standards for SEN Support and Outreach Services*. Downloadable from the DfES website.

Department for Education and Skills (2005b) *Education Improvement Partnerships: Local Collaboration for School Improvement and Better Service Delivery*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.

OFSTED (2005) *Inclusion: the impact of LEA support and outreach services*.

SPECIAL CHILDREN (October, 2003) *At Your Service: An Interview with Peter Rennie*. Birmingham: Questions Publishing.