



BETTER COMMISSIONING FOR AUTISM EDUCATION (4)

SHORT GUIDE TO WEB-BASED DATA

There is a range of web-based data available to the public including local authority SEN officers and those who manage commissioning functions. Relatively little of this deals with autism specific data at pupil, school or local authority level.

Autism Data

The National Autistic Society¹⁵ provides a guide to searching for autism data, but this does not deal with the local authority pupil level detail that is needed to support the commissioning process. Its focus is more geared to research.

Local Authority level data

The research gateway¹⁶ of the Department for Education (DFE) is a good starting point to search for more detail in statistical returns and reports. You will need to be familiar with using Excel.

A number of annual reports are published, with the majority drawing on information from the annual school census return. The following includes data that enables more detailed analyses and comparisons to take place. The Local Authority seminar <http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/good-practice/case%20studies/north%20yorkshire%20better%20commissioning%20seminar.aspx> used data from a number of these statistical reports to judge current position and performance against other local authorities. The data summaries used to support the training are available at this link and provide exemplars of what can be constructed through using web-based data.

This table lists data sources that have been used throughout the AET Commissioning projects.

Title	Month of publication	Content relating to Autism
DfE: Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics (SFR 09) ¹⁷	January	Table 7c – numbers of pupils by type of school and primary SEN
DfE: Pupil Absence in Schools in England ¹⁸	October & January	Table 4 – pupil absence by characteristic, including SEN status Tables 6&7 – pupil absence – local authority level
DfE: Foundation Stage Profile Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England (SFR39/2010) ¹⁹	December 2010	Table 7 – achievement of foundation stage children by SEN status
DfE: Children with SEN – an analysis 2009 ²⁰	October of each year	Theme 1: Characteristics of pupils with SEN Themes 2 to 5: Attainment of pupils with SEN. Theme 6: Absence and exclusions from school of pupils with SEN.
DfE: Children with SEN – an analysis 2010 ²¹		
DfE: Special Educational Needs in England ²²	January (and June for local authority level data)	Characteristics of pupils with SEN by provision. Assessment and placement of pupils with statements. Type of SEN by school placement
DfE: GCSE and Equivalent Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England ²³ (09/10)	December 2010	GCSE and equivalent results by different pupil characteristics, including special educational needs (SEN) at National and Local Authority level
DfE: Key Stage 2 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2009/10 ²⁴	December 2010	KS2 attainment by different pupil characteristics, including special educational needs (SEN), at national and LA level.

The majority of local authority SEN officers have used the National Strategy SEN Self Evaluation framework²⁴. The framework supports local authorities in reviewing and evaluating their strategies to plot their own progress and identify areas for further development. This does not contain autism specific information fields, but additions can be made to framework. However it does provide a robust framework within which autism, or other disability specific data, can be considered.

Value for Money

Being sure that the way in which services are delivered represents good value for money, requires a clarity about inputs (usually funding) and outputs and outcomes (including pupil level outcomes and strategic performance targets).

The National Strategy team published some VFM case studies in 2009²⁵. These show the inextricable links between identifying measureable outcomes, knowing what resource is put in, and monitoring the outcomes and outputs of the provision / programme.

Locally, officers will be able to identify what is spent on SEN. Depending on how services and budgets are constructed and monitored, it may be possible to identify what is spent on autism related services. However, comparisons are limited and tend to relate to trends from year to year.

An essential starting point is to make comparisons between and across local authorities in relation to the overall spend on SEN and behaviour, through looking at section 251 budget statements²⁶.

Benchmarking tables of LA planned expenditure: 2010-11

Section 251 of the Apprenticeship, Schools, Colleges and Learners Act requires local authorities to publish the way in which they plan to spend their children's services budget, and at the end of the year, the out-turn position. Benchmarking tables can be constructed to make a range of comparisons. In certain categories, planned expenditure varies greatly between LAs, and spending on SEN and behaviour are two of these.

Local authorities must also publish, on their web-sites, their own section 251 budget workbooks. These show the detail of each school's budget, and the various elements of that, including targeted funding for SEN. It is also possible to see the balance of targeted SEN funding from one phase to another, and the different values of the age weighted pupil unit. A list of local authority web-site references, for local authority section 251 budget workbooks and statements, is available on the DfE website²⁷.

Whilst it is not possible to identify autism specific spending, it is possible to compare spending profiles with other data, and explore related questions, for example:

- (i) *Does my local authority secure better KS2 attainment scores for pupils with an autism spectrum disorder, and if so, is this because we spend more on centrally retained support services than other local authorities?, or*
- (ii) *There is a much larger proportion of children with an ASD in primary mainstream than secondary mainstream in my local authority. Are there any SEN funding differences between primary, secondary and special schools that might be relevant?*

Instructions to access section 251 budget comparisons (Local Authority level)

Click on

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/financialmanagement/schools/revenuefunding/Copy%20of%20section251/a0069747/benchmarking-2010-11>

The page that you find through the above link acts as a portal to other documents and spread sheets.

Start with the **per capita gross** table in the right hand column.

This opens a new screen. At the top of the screen where it says “Macros have been disabled”, click on options and then enable the macros. You can’t use this sheet / screen if you don’t do this.

You are then offered options in the white box below where it says “Choice”. Click and choose the sample data you want. This will identify the statistical neighbours of the LA you name, or the other LAs in the region, or all metropolitan authorities etc.

You are then taken to another page where you select your LA, or the one you are interested in. Select the table or view.

You then see all the categories of spend within the s251 budget. The 1.2.x categories or columns deal with SEN and the 1.3.x columns deal with behaviour.

Keep scrolling along to see the wide range of ways in which planned spend on children’s services is categorised. The amounts of funding are calculated on a per pupil bases so comparisons can be made. The per pupil population is all the pupils in that authority.

Guidance²⁸ is issued to LAs to help the accountants to know what activity should be listed against which category. Academies are allocated a share of categories 1.2.2 and 1.3.2 according to how many pupils on their rolls. This is through the LACSEG – local authority central spending education grant.

Look at the per capita sub-headings where the spend by type is grouped – so all behaviour, all SEN planned spend is grouped together... this enables you to look at other types of spend in children’s services.

If you click at the bottom of the right hand column on the first webpage²⁶ (and see above), you see local authority level key stage funding ratios for age weighted pupil units – AWPUs.

All of this is broad background information and helps you to get a sense of what your LA is spending where, compared to others.

It is worth opening the various tables to get familiar with how spending plans are reported. You can ask your schools funding officer to explain it to you.

Using data to make value for money judgements and to inform priorities for action.

The SEN information Act (2008)²⁹ has led to more data being published that links type of SEN, for example ASD, with attainment levels, or attendance and absence data. Whilst the section 251 budget statements do not identify specific spending on ASD support services, or ASD placements in mainstream or special schools, your schools finance officer should be able to show you what service costs are attached to what section 251 category.

You can compare inputs (funding) and outputs and outcomes for children with an ASD, with outputs and outcomes for all children, and then for all children with SEN.

You can also link more broadly with colleagues who maintain data by geographical areas, or “localities” within your LA.

By recording decisions taken for pupils (eg: diagnosis; placement in special school; place for parent on ASD training programme), you will be able to monitor trends within and across areas in your local authority. This may inform the way that some services are distributed, or it may inform approaches to providing guidance and priorities to fieldwork staff.

Example:

One large local authority noted that there was a much higher rate of diagnosis in one of its locality areas, and within this area there was a significantly higher level of requests for statutory assessments and statements, and for places in special schools. The issues emerged as strategic rather than relating to need. The analysis of strategic and pupil level outcomes / outputs led the local ASD team to look very carefully at how its time and the nature of support was provided.

Good Luck!

It takes a while to become familiar with the data, and then to see how the data can help you to improve services and outcomes for children.

If you have any questions, please contact our consultant, Penny Richardson, on penny.richardson@consideredsolutions.co.uk

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- 15 <http://www.autism.org.uk/about-autism/autism-library/databases/autism-data/autism-data-a-brief-guide-to-searching.aspx>
 - 16 <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/>
 - 17 <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000925/index.shtml>
 - 18 <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000962/index.shtml>
 - 19 <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000979/index.shtml>
 - 20 <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000851/index.shtml>
 - 21 <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000965/index.shtml>
 - 22 <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000939/index.shtml>
 - 23 <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000977/index.shtml>
 - 24 <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/161636>
 - 25 http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/187877?uc=force_uj
 - 26 <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/financialmanagement/schoolsrevenuefunding/Copy%20of%20section251/a0069747/benchmarking-2010-11>
 - 27 <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/financeandfunding/section251/a0068030/1a-section-251-website-addresses>
 - 28 <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/financeandfunding/section251/archive/b0068040/guidance-archive/budget-guidance>
 - 29 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/2008?title=Special%20Educational%20Needs%20%28Information%29%20Act>