

**LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS TRAINING
FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS**

All Wales Centre of Excellence for Governor Training and Research

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Introduction

The findings of this study are based on information from a questionnaire survey (Appendix 1) sent to all 22 Welsh unitary authorities in February 2002, and the governor training programmes for all Welsh LEAs for the academic years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002.

What is meant by Special Educational Needs Training?

It is quite possible to argue that all training for school governors involves, to a greater or lesser degree, aspects of Special Educational Needs, and therefore all governor training could be included under the Special Educational Needs heading. For example, courses on literacy and numeracy will clearly contain a significant Special Educational Needs element: equally, though probably less apparent, there will be parts of courses on induction, and on the role of the governing body, for example, which will also touch on Special Educational Needs.

Unless all training courses are to be included in Special Educational Needs training, some boundary definition is necessary. For the purposes of this study only two types of courses will be considered:

- those courses where the main focus is clearly on Special Educational Needs in general or a particular Special Educational Need;
- those courses which may be focused primarily on a social/behavioural problem, but the content of which has a clear impact on a child's educational needs - specifically, *inclusion, behaviour and child protection*.

SECTION 1: TYPES OF TRAINING

LEAs offer a variety of Special Educational Needs training courses for governors (Tables 1 and 2). The most popular are the general “SEN Issues” courses which usually deal with awareness-raising and the statutory responsibilities of governing bodies, though in a number of cases they also consider other topics such as the Code of Practice. The emphasis placed on courses whose main focus is social needs is worthy of note, with authorities providing a relatively large number of courses on *inclusion*, *behaviour* and, particularly, *child protection*.

It must also be remembered that induction courses for governors (which are not included in these statistics) almost always have a section devoted to Special Educational Needs.

In addition, LEAs are increasingly offering individual governing body training. The choice of topics usually lies with each governing body and, historically, the most popular subject has been *preparation for inspection*. However, the opportunity exists for further Special Educational Needs training to be provided in this way. At least six Welsh LEAs provide such an individual governing body training service.

Definitions for Tables 1 and 2

SEN Issues include:

- raising awareness of basic issues in relation to SEN
- promoting understanding of critical procedures and processes
- governors’ statutory responsibilities and their role in dealing with SEN pupils

Specialist Courses include:

- autism
- accelerated learning
- dyspraxia
- dyslexia
- ADHD
- exceptionally able pupils

Other courses include:

- human rights
- basic skills

Table 1: Types of Training 2000 – 2001

Type of Training	Number of LEAs offering at least one course
SEN Issues	9 ⁽ⁱ⁾
Inclusion	5
Behaviour	5
Child Protection	7
Code of Practice	5
Specialist Courses	3 ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾
Other Courses	4 ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

Notes:

- (i) One LEA offers three courses of this type
- (ii) One LEA offers four courses of this type
- (iii) One LEA offers two courses of this type, and one LEA offers three courses of this type.

Table 2: Types of Training 2001 – 2002*

Type of Training	Number of LEAs offering at least one course
SEN Issues	6 ⁽ⁱ⁾
Inclusion	2
Behaviour	5
Child Protection	7
Code of Practice	5
Specialist Courses	2
Other Courses	8 ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

Notes:

* These figures do not include training for the Summer term 2002 for 11 LEAs

- (i) One LEA offers two courses of this type
- (ii) One LEA offers two courses of this type, and one LEA offers three courses of this type.

Two LEAs either did not offer or else cancelled courses owing to the Foot and Mouth epidemic

SECTION 2: FORMS OF TRAINING

LEAs offer Special Educational Needs training either as discrete courses or in combination with other topics. Some offer both types of training. The topics with which Special Educational Needs is combined vary, but they are usually related subjects such as bullying and equal rights. Most LEAs devote part of their new governor induction courses to Special Educational Needs. However, induction courses have not been included in these statistics (Table 3).

Table 3: Forms of Training

Form of Training		Number of LEAs providing
1999-2000	Discrete courses only	16
	Combined courses only	1
2000-2001	Discrete courses only	16
	Combined courses only	1
Autumn term 2001	Discrete courses only	6
	Combined courses only	3

Notes:

Two LEAs provided both discrete and combined courses in both 1999-2000 and 2000- 2001.
Two LEAs did not provide/cancelled courses owing to the Foot and Mouth epidemic

By far the most popular method of organising Special Educational Needs governor training is through discrete courses, with only one LEA in both 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 providing combined courses only. A number of LEAs (six) also provide individual governing body training so that governors are able to receive SEN training through this method if they wish. One LEA offers a two-hour centrally funded training course to individual governing bodies each financial year, and Special Educational Needs is one of the modules offered.

SECTION 3: PROVIDERS OF TRAINING

Table 4

Provider of Training	Number of LEAs using
LEA officers with SEN remit	13
LEA SEN Adviser	17
School SENCO	3
Other provider	2
One type of provider only	10
Two types of provider	10
Three types of provider	2

Although a variety of training providers are used by LEAs for Special Educational Needs governor training, as might be expected, the most popular providers are the specialist LEA advisers. It is interesting that little use is made of school SENCOs, with only three LEAs employing them in their governor training programmes. Only three authorities use training providers who are not employed in their education service, one of them involving staff from the Social Care and Housing Departments.

The LEAs which use only one type of training provider fall into two groups of roughly equal size. Four LEAs use LEA officers with a SEN remit, while six LEAs employ specialist SEN advisers. For those LEAs who use two types of provider, the most popular combination is LEA officers with a SEN remit and LEA Special Needs adviser, with eight of the ten LEAs in this group opting for this specialist combination. There is a similar high degree of specialist input in those LEAs which opt for a combination of three providers.

SECTION 4: DAYS AND TIMES OF TRAINING

Out of a total of twenty unitary authorities (two LEAs' governor training courses were very badly affected by the Foot and Mouth crisis in the academic years being researched), fourteen ran courses on different days of the week, while the remaining six usually ran courses on the same day. However, there was no correlation between attendance at sessions and their being held on different days.

Sixteen out of twenty unitary authorities ran their courses at the same time (usually in the evening), while four varied their times. Once again, there was no correlation between timing of training sessions and popularity.

SECTION 5: GOVERNOR ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING COURSES

Attendance figures for Special Needs training courses are low throughout Welsh LEAs in spite of the variety of ways, venues, and times that are employed to combat this problem.

However, for the following reasons, it is extremely difficult to extract meaningful comparative data for each LEA from the information available:

- some LEAs provide training for individual governing bodies, so the average attendance at these sessions will never be above twenty at the most;
- a number of authorities provide the same course at different locations, which will result in more governors receiving training than if it were provided at one location only, but resulting in average attendances being lower;
- where Special Needs training is offered in combination with other topics, particularly if it is part of an induction course, it is very difficult to know how large a part of the content is devoted to Special Educational Needs and, indeed, whether or not and how many governors attended the session for the Special Needs element.

The following observations of a number of LEA Governor Support Officers sum up their views on attendance at Special Needs training sessions:

“We intended to run a particular (training) session at six venues but had to cancel these because of poor attendance.”

“Since 1999/2000 to date 202 have attended (SEN training courses), but average numbers are low regardless of day or time.”

“Our SEN training is usually well received but, as with other courses, attendance is relatively small.”

It is worth noting that research undertaken in 2000 by the All Wales Centre of Excellence for Governor Training and Research showed that attendance at governor training events in general was poor.¹

In the academic year 1999/2000, with the exception of one LEA, all authorities reported that there was no one course which had better attendance than the others offered. The exception was an introductory course on Special Educational Needs offered by one particular LEA. The same LEA reported that in 2000/2001, a course specialising in ADHD, dyspraxia and dyslexia was also better attended than other courses.

A second LEA had higher than average attendance figures for a course on inclusion. For the remaining authorities, attendance was at roughly the same level for all its courses.

¹ *The Training of School Governors in Wales* (Swansea: All Wales Centre of Excellence for Governor Training and Research, 2000)

SECTION 6: TRAINING FOR THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY ACT 2001

Table 5: LEA Governor Training Provision for SENDA

	2001-2002	2002-2003
Training for SENDA as a discrete course	6	10
Training for SENDA in combination with other SEN topics	4	4
Training for SENDA both in discrete form and in combination	0	2

It is clear that all LEAs are either training or preparing to train governors in the requirements of the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.

In the academic year 2001-2002 (though in reality the training courses will take place in the Easter and summer terms of 2002), four authorities will be running courses in combination with other SEN topics, while six will be running discrete courses on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.

In 2002-2003, four authorities will be running courses in combination with other topics, and ten as discrete courses. One LEA has not yet decided which of the two training methods to adopt and the remaining LEAs had not yet drafted their governor training programme for 2002-2003 at the time the questionnaire was sent to them (February 2002).

SECTION 7: OTHER COMMENTS

In the questionnaire survey, LEA governor support officers were asked if there were any aspects of Special Educational Needs training which they considered needed greater emphasis, or on which they would like to comment. There were four responses.

Two respondents believed that greater emphasis should be placed on training governors in the new Code of Practice; one respondent considered that more attention should be paid to admissions and exclusions, while the last wanted a sharper focus on the role of governors in monitoring SEN provision in schools.

SECTION 8: CONCLUSIONS

- It is clear that LEAs across Wales are providing a wide range of courses on Special Educational Needs topics. Clearly, given the relatively small size of Welsh authorities, no one LEA is able to offer courses which cover all Special Educational Needs areas and this presents a problem for a governor who lives in an LEA which does not provide the type of course (s)he wants. In fact, it is highly unlikely that they will even know if any other Welsh LEA offers such a course, as they are unlikely to be notified of training courses in any LEA other than their own.
- A small majority of LEAs (12) use more than one type of training provider, through very few (3) utilise school SENCOs. As these are experts who are actually in the field, as it were, and who by the nature of their job should have good communication skills, it is surprising that they are not involved more in governor training strategies.
- Attendance at governor training courses is disappointing in spite of the best efforts of governor support officers to vary locations, days and times. However, this problem is not peculiar to Special Educational Needs courses, as research already undertaken by the Centre has shown this to be the case for all governor training courses.² It is likely that a radical change of approach to governor training is needed if this problem is to be solved.

² Ibid.

January 2002

**ALL WALES CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
FOR GOVERNOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH**

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS TRAINING
FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS**

Name of Local Education Authority:

1 How many primary and secondary schools are in your LEA?

Primary:

Secondary:

2 Who usually takes the training on the Special Educational Needs courses you provide for governors?

(a) Local government officers with a Special Educational Needs remit

(b) LEA Special Educational Needs Adviser(s)

(c) School SENCO(s)

(d) Outside providers

(e) A combination of two or more of the above
(Please state the combination, eg. (a) + (b))

(f) Other (please specify)

.....
.....

3 **In 1999-2000**, did your LEA provide SEN Training for governors (tick one or both boxes if applicable)

Average no. of
Governors attending

(a) As part of a training session(s) in combination with other topics

(b) As discrete SEN courses

(c) Was/were any particular course(s) markedly better attended than others? YES / NO
If YES, please specify:

.....

- 4** In 2000-2001, did your LEA provide SEN Training for governors (tick one or both boxes if applicable)
- | | | Average no. of
<u>Governors attending</u> |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| (a) As part of a training session(s) in combination with other topics | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| (b) As discrete SEN courses | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| (c) Was/were any particular course(s) markedly better attended than others?
If YES, please specify: | | YES / NO |
| | | |

- 5** In the Autumn Term of 2001, did your LEA provide SEN Training for governors (tick one or both boxes if applicable)
- | | | Average no. of
<u>Governors attending</u> |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| (a) As part of a training session(s) in combination with other topics | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| (b) As discrete SEN courses | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| (c) Was/were any particular course(s) markedly better attended than others?
If YES, please specify: | | YES / NO |
| | | |

- 6** Do you vary the days and times of your Special Education Needs governor training courses?
- (a) We run courses on different days of the week YES / NO
- (b) We run courses at different times of the day YES / NO

- 7** If you answered YES to question 6(a), did you find a marked difference in attendance at courses on different days of the week? YES / NO
- If YES, please specify the most popular day(s):

In your professional opinion, might the seeming popularity of the day(s) have been linked with the subject of the training session? YES / NO

8 If you answered YES to question 6(b), did you find a marked difference in attendance at courses at different times of the day? YES / NO

If YES, please specify the most popular time(s):

In your professional opinion, might the seeming popularity of the time(s) have been linked with the subject of the training session? YES / NO

9 Does your Special Needs governor training programme for 2001-2002 include training in the provisions and requirements of the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act: (tick one or both boxes if applicable)

(a) as part of a training session(s) in combination with other topics

(b) as a discrete training session

10 If you are not providing any governor training on the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act in your governor training for 2001-2002, do you intend to include such training in 2002-2003: (tick one or both boxes if applicable)

(a) as part of a training session(s) in combination with other topics

(b) as a discrete training session

11 Are there any aspects of Special Educational Needs governor training which you feel need greater emphasis, or on which you would like to comment?

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Thank you for your help in completing this questionnaire. Please return your completed form in the SAE provided by **15 February 2002** to:

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