

Letter to the editor

The potential impact of the SEN Green Paper ‘Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability’ on the educational inclusion of autistic children in mainstream education

This essay was written for the Autism Policy and Practice module of the Sheffield Hallam University / National Autistic Society Post Graduate Certificate in Asperger Syndrome. Since it was submitted there have been several significant developments which are important to consider:

- The SEN Green Paper discussed has been out for consultation, revised and moved through parliament. It is now ‘Part 3’ of the Children and Families Act, which received royal assent in March 2014.
- The SEN Code of Practice (2001) has been revised/rewritten and was replaced in September 2014.
- The new DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2014) has been published and all autism related conditions have been reclassified under the umbrella term ‘Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)’.

I am disappointed with the APA decision to retain ‘disorder’ in favour of a less pejorative term. I still choose to refer to individuals/populations - who share the neurological difference/behavioural presentation necessary for a diagnosis of ‘ASD’ - as ‘autistic’ or ‘with autism’.

The majority of the relevant SEN/inclusion literature I reviewed focused specifically on children diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome as this was/is the group of autistic individuals typically educated/included in the mainstream school system, rather than in specialist provision. Asperger Syndrome is not included in the DSM-5 and individuals will now only receive this specific diagnostic label where the ICD-10 (World Health Organisation (WHO), 1994) is in use. However, the term is still widely used and understood by individuals, parents, researchers and practitioners and, when the focus of the literature is exclusive, the distinction has been retained in this essay.

I use the term Predominant Neurotype (PNT) throughout to refer to children without autism who are considered to be developmentally typical/neurologically representative of the general population.

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