

Natspec response to “Good Intentions, Good Enough?”, the independent review into experiences and outcomes of children and young people in residential special schools and colleges

Natspec has welcomed the vision set out in the independent review into residential special schools and colleges, in which most children and young people will be able to access support and quality education locally, with specialist residential education recognised as the best option for a small number of young people.

The review, “Good Intentions, Good Enough?” by Dame Christine Lenehan, was published this week.

The membership association for organisations which offer specialist further education provision supports the report's call for a more collaborative approach, and says specialist providers have much to offer in helping Local Authorities achieve the vision set out.

Clare Howard, Chief Executive of Natspec, said, "We welcome the review and are keen to work with the Department of Education, Local Authorities and others to plan for a future where all young people have access to high quality education or training and care, which meets their individual needs and supports their aspirations. The majority of placements at Natspec colleges are local day placements, and our members have much to offer in helping LAs ensure that more young people can have their needs met locally. Regional specialist providers who provide for the small number of residential students, can also support through outreach and training services"

Natspec is pleased that the report recognises the place for residential specialist education, and that it can “transform the lives of some of the most vulnerable children and young people”, and “can offer extended learning opportunities, respite for families, opportunities to learn independence skills and accommodation for those with social care needs”.

“To plan effectively and develop trust between LAs and providers, we need solutions that integrate cost-effective residential options for the very small numbers whose complex combination of needs are so low-incidence that regional or national residential provision is the most appropriate, (around 1,200 young people) and for those entering their late teenage years and early adulthood, where the development of independence skills, away from the family home, is critical to their futures” said Ms Howard.

“Effective regional and national planning for the young people who fall into these two groups could avoid many of the delays and failings of the system highlighted in the report, save the costs of tribunals, and lead to less conflict.

“The Lenehan report exposes many failings in the implementation of the Children and Families Act. The Act was ambitious and forward looking, but was not properly resourced. Easing the budget constraints on both LAs and providers would make a significant difference to the numbers of children and young people that are currently being let down by the system.”