

Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee

Inquiry into a Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation agenda

Personal Submission

I am a part-time literacy teacher attached to one of the LITs.

While the new LIT model sounds good in principle, in my experience the reality is completely different.

I am greatly concerned – and frustrated – by the lack of direct one-to-one teaching intervention under the new LIT model. Prior to its introduction, my role as a teacher in the EA's Literacy Service saw approximately 90% of my time devoted to direct teaching and 10% to administration. However, the position is now completely reversed. Since the beginning of September 2025, I have been allocated only one Pathway 3 pupil, whom I will teach directly for a maximum of twelve sessions. The remaining 13 pupils allocated to me are down for either Pathway 1 or Pathway 2 provision. These two pathways do not involve direct teaching intervention.

This new LIT model is supposed to adopt a 'child-centred' approach, but I would argue that this is so far from being the case as to be laughable. As a teacher, my qualifications, passion, and commitment are focused on being out in schools, directly supporting children face to face. I now have barely any face-to-face teaching, and I question why 90% of my time should be spent on administrative tasks rather than teaching children. Given that we are living in an era when resources are scarce, there is something seriously wrong with this system when professional teachers are deployed, in effect, as clerical officers. I should be out teaching, not dealing with an overwhelming volume of administrative tasks that do nothing to address the literacy needs of pupils who should be receiving direct teaching intervention.

I am concerned about how a Request for Involvement (RFI) is moderated and a pathway of support decided. Schools have been given little guidance about completing an RFI and what the set criteria for each pathway entails. So far, there appears to be a far greater number of Pathway 1s and 2s allocated compared to the number of Pathway 3s. I question why this is the case. Has there been a direction given not to allocate Pathway 3 provision?

On the face of it, a large number of Pathway 1s and 2s might give the impression that a greater number of children are being served by the system, but that would be misleading if children are not receiving direct teaching support. Given that numbers of children with SEN are rising, it would be astounding if the numbers requiring direct teaching support were simultaneously declining.

Going forward, my suggestion for literacy intervention, would be to revert to the previous model whereby each teacher was allocated a caseload of children for direct teaching support. Resource pressures may mean that, where it is feasible for the individual children and where

school space permits, it might be helpful to withdraw children in twos or threes, rather than withdrawing them individually. That would allow more children to benefit from direct teaching intervention, and it would relieve classroom teachers of the impossible task of trying to provide remedial teaching to a small number of children while still trying to teach the rest of the class with its own, further differentiation needs.

I would have no issue with this. In this scenario, as before, I would continue to support staff and parents in an advisory capacity by meeting with them to discuss the progress of children that I had actually had an opportunity to get to know and support over time. (This is another failing of the new system: I am expected to advise about children with whom I have had little or no interaction.)

Meanwhile, Pathways 1 and 2 should be provided to schools by a different team of specialists given that these are 'non-teaching' Pathways. This would leave teaching professionals free to focus solely on what they are trained and qualified to do.

Finally, I want to make the point that this goes beyond mere teething troubles. Major problems seem to be hard-baked in to the new model. The longer this goes on, without correction, the more children are passing through their formative years without the proper support that they so desperately need.

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