



**Curran, H. (2021) 'Developing SENCO resilience: understanding and meeting the challenge of the role', in Beaton, M.C., Codina, G.N. and Wharton, J.C., eds. *Leading on inclusion: the role of the SENCO*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 171-180.**

This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in '*Leading on inclusion: the role of the SENCO*' on 22/04/2021 available online at: <https://www.routledge.com/Leading-on-Inclusion-The-Role-of-the-SENCO/Beaton-Codina-Wharton/p/book/9780367420505>

## ResearchSPAcE

<http://researchspace.bathspa.ac.uk/>

This pre-published version is made available in accordance with publisher policies.  
Please cite only the published version using the reference above.

Your access and use of this document is based on your acceptance of the  
ResearchSPAcE Metadata and Data Policies, as well as applicable law:-

<https://researchspace.bathspa.ac.uk/policies.html>

Unless you accept the terms of these Policies in full, you do not have permission  
to download this document.

This cover sheet may not be removed from the document.

Please scroll down to view the document.

## Developing SENCO resilience: understanding and meeting the challenge of the role

### Introduction

The role of the Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) holds a unique position in schools. Tasked with overseeing provision for children with special educational needs (SEN) in their setting (DfE and DoH, 2015), the SENCO is required to be both strategic and operational in their approach (Rosen-Webb, 2011; Morewood, 2012). This mandatory role, with the requirement to be suitably qualified, is typically considered to be a senior role (DfE and DoH, 2015), with the recognition that it is a role which has the potential to influence whole school practices (Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012). Yet this is a role which is normally undertaken by one person (Szwed, 2007; Curran et al., 2018).

It could be argued that the SENCO holds a role which is particularly unique in schools, in part due to the breadth and complexity of the role (Qureshi, 2014). However, it could also be argued that this uniqueness may be exacerbated by a lack of clarity in policy and literature (Pearson, 2010; Rosen-Webb, 2011; Robertson, 2012; Cole, 2005; Tissot, 2013), the variation in approaches to role facilitation (Tissot, 2013) and the qualification requirements of the role (SENCO regulations 2008; 2009). Such variation is predominantly evident when considered in relation to other middle and senior leadership roles. As a consequence, the experience of each SENCO differs in each context (Hallett and Hallett, 2017) which leads to further variation of the role (Cowne, 2005). Whilst the unique nature of the role can present challenges for its effective facilitation (Hallett and Hallett, 2017), this equally can provide opportunities for the SENCO to determine and shape policy in relation to their role, as well as shape the development of SEN and inclusive policy within their setting (Curran, 2019a).

This chapter seeks to explore some of the specific challenges a SENCO may experience, particularly in relation to the nuances of the role and how others perceive their function. Facilitation of SENCO responsibilities, and variances within this, will be considered alongside the relationship between role fulfilment and ethical considerations. Finally, the chapter will explore potential opportunities for the role, in terms of its facilitation and development, with consideration given as to the notion of developing resilience within the role and the factors that can positively influence growth in this area.

### The SENCO role; a uniquely perceived role in schools

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) provides the statutory guidance for schools and organisations relating to how Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 should be implemented. Specifically, the SEND Code of Practice outlines the duties, policies and procedures for schools, and other organisations, in relation to the provision for children with SEN. Central to the implementation of these

duties is the SENCO (Ekins, 2012). The statutory guidance includes eleven 'key responsibilities' which may form part of the SENCO role, with an acknowledgment that the SENCO 'has an important role to play with the head teacher and governing body, in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in the school' with a further explanation that 'the SENCO has day to day responsibility for the operation of SEN policy and coordination of specific provision made to support individual pupils with SEN, including those who have Education, Health and Care Plans' (DfE and DoH, 2015 p.108).

A key challenge associated with the role is the way in which the responsibilities, as outlined by the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015), are interpreted and applied in different settings (Pearson, 2010). Ekins (2012) argues that the role has historically experienced significant change and development since its inception, which has contributed to the variance in interpretation. Dobson and Douglas suggest that the use of the terminology 'may include' within the SEND Code of Practice in relation to their responsibilities further lends to the legal uncertainty as to the expectations of the SENCO role (2020a p. 300). In turn, this has led to disparity, which Smith and Broomhead argue has created a role which is 'wide and complex' (2019 p. 54).

However, a further challenge relates to how the SENCO role is perceived by others. The SENCO is in a position where they will be expected to work with various individuals, concurrently. This typically includes families, multi-agencies, teachers, other schools and the Local Authority (Edwards, 2016). Such collaboration is essential to ensure that the needs of the child or young person are met effectively (Ekins, 2012). Yet, different groups may hold varying understandings regarding the enactment of the SENCO role, leading to different expectations.

The National SENCO Workload Survey suggested that SENCOs felt their role was not widely understood by staff, with only 27% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they felt their role was understood in school (Curran et al., 2018). Smith and Broomhead (2019) suggest that parents and staff often view the SENCO as the expert, supporting Mackenzie (2007) who suggested that parents would often go directly to the SENCO for advice and support, viewing them as the expert, perhaps circumnavigating the teacher. This contrasts with how SENCOs often view themselves, with Layton (2005) suggesting that SENCOs did not see themselves as a leader. Such a dichotomy in role perception could lead to high expectations and an increased pressure on the role (Smith and Broomhead, 2019).

Whilst the varied interpretations may be due to the way the role has evolved over time (Ekins, 2012) it could also be suggested that there is a current vacuum of knowledge and information in relation to the role. Certainly, Allan and Youdell (2015) would agree, suggesting that whilst the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) contains a number of mandatory activities, the document lacks substance. Lehane supports this notion, describing

the content as, 'a grey area in terms of statutory guidance' (2016, p. 61). Whilst this presents challenges, this can equally present an opportunity to shape the role specifically to the setting, within the parameters of the guidance (Curran, 2019b). Ball and colleagues, when considering the various roles individuals assume during the implementation of policy, may refer to this as a *policy narrator*; a crucial role for policy implementation, describing its function as 'explaining policy, deciding and then announcing what must be done, what can be done and what cannot' (2011, p. 626). Yet, from the perspective of the SENCO, perhaps the opportunity lies within the role of the policy entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs are 'charismatic people and "persuasive personalities" and forceful agents of change, who are personally invested in and identified with policy ideas and their enactment' (Ball et al., 2011, p.628). Given the breadth of the role, and the varied interpretations of policy (Dobson and Douglas, 2020a) this suggests that the SENCO has scope to interpret policy as a tool to not only facilitate change in their setting but also to shape their role due to the 'clout' that statutory guidance can provide (Curran, 2019a p. 19).

Furthermore, it could be argued that the emphasis should be placed on the teachers' understanding of their role and duties in relation to supporting children with additional needs, as this then, by default, makes the coordination aspect of the SENCO role more apparent. The SEND Code of Practice stresses that 'teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class' (DfE and DoH, 2015 p. 99). However, internationally it is recognised that there is a lack of competency within the teaching profession in relation to teaching pupils with SEN (Cooc, 2019). This suggests a requirement for teacher's continuing professional development (CPD), with the SEND Code of Practice indicating that part of the SENCO role is to provide 'professional guidance to colleagues' (DfE and DoH, 2015 p. 108). The majority SEN focused CPD within school is determined by the senior leadership team (SLT) alongside the SENCO, with the SENCO being the key deliverer of such activities (Wall et al., 2019). There is scope here for the SENCO to strategically determine the focus of such activities, with suggestions that the teachers with the highest need, in terms of cohort but also their own CPD requirements, should be the focus for school CPD activities (Cooc, 2019). Yet this also suggests that initial CPD focused on outlining the role and duties of the teacher would be beneficial in supporting the wider understanding of all roles within school (Curran, 2019b).

### The SENCO role; facilitating the role in school

A further distinctive feature of the SENCO role, in comparison to others within school, is the disparate way in which time is allocated to the role, which consequently impacts on how the role is facilitated; a perennial issue since the role was introduced (Garner, 1996; Cowne, 2005; Curran et al., 2018). Dobson and Douglas highlight the inconsistency of the SENCO role in varying school contexts, attributing this in part to the 'significant local autonomy' which has led to differences in interpretation at a senior leader level (2020a p. 300); with

research suggesting that there is also inconsistency between schools with similar demographics (Smith and Broomhead, 2019).

However, whilst Soan (2017) argues that as the SENCO role has developed over time, so has the need for more time to execute the role, particularly due to the requirement to demonstrate leadership skills, it could also be argued that, since its inception, the role has been burdened with bureaucratic demands (Bowers et al., 1998; Curran et al., 2018). As a result, SENCOs typically do not consider that sufficient time is allocated to the role (Smith and Broomhead, 2019). The National SENCO Workload Survey (Curran et al., 2018) illustrated this point, with 70% of SENCOs respondents stating that they did not feel that they had enough time allocated to the role, with 71% citing administration tasks as the primary function of their role.

With a disparate system, the challenge is compounded due to the limited statutory guidance regarding time allocation for the role, with the SEND Code of Practice stating, 'The school should ensure that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out these functions' (DfE and DoH, 2015 p. 109). Dobson and Douglas (2020a) suggest that the issue of role facilitation is exacerbated because SENCOs themselves are influenced by their own experiences of the SENCO role throughout their teaching career, and as a consequence this impacts on how they interpret and facilitate their role once they are in post. Certainly, time for the SENCO role varies significantly with the recent National SENCO Workload Survey (Curran et al., 2018) illustrating that nearly half of all primary SENCOs were allocated two days or less to the role on a weekly basis. The work of Smith and Broomhead (2019) suggested that SENCOs who had been in post for longer periods of time tended to be able to negotiate increased non-contact time, tentatively concluding that this may be related to an increased understanding of their role over time. This further highlights the importance of understanding the duties, as well as the parameters, of the role.

Whilst to date there is no specific statutory guidance regarding SENCO time allocation, a recent publication by Whole School SEND consortium (Whole School SEND, 2020), which is funded by the Department for Education, made reference to the time allocation guidance devised as part of the National SENCO Workload Survey (Curran et al., 2018), including the suggestion that a SENCO in an average sized primary school, with their percentage of children with SEN in line with the national average, should have between three and four days non-contact time to fulfil the functions of the role. This suggests that guidance is emerging in response to the issue of how a SENCO can meet the statutory functions of their role.

Perhaps one of the key developments, which has further impacted on the facilitation of the role, has been the introduction of the requirement for a SENCO to be a qualified teacher, and to gain 60 credits at Masters Level, as part of the National Award for SEN

Coordination (NA SENCO) within three years of taking up their post (The Education [SENCO] regulation 2008; 2009). Mandatory training to fulfil a specific role within school only applies to the SENCO, since the requirement for head teachers to have the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) was made non-mandatory (Soan, 2017). It is undeniable that undertaking a Masters level qualification whilst beginning a new role will temporarily impact on the facilitation of the SENCO role. Therefore it is important to consider its purpose and potential.

The NA SENCO 'represents an important stage in developing the credibility and preparedness of individuals fulfilling the SENCO role' (Brown and Doveston, 2014 p. 506), developed with the specific aim of raising the status of the role, particularly strategically (Ekins, 2012). However, whilst the qualification may provide opportunities for learning about the role and related theory, there are further benefits to undertaking the qualification. Mackenzie (2012) suggests that the academic challenge associated with the role is linked with maintaining motivation for the role. In addition to this, although pre NA SENCO, Barnes (2008) highlighted that a SENCOs' knowledge can impact on the process of identification, in particular how pupils' needs are perceived by the SENCO, suggesting a positive impact on operational practice. From a strategic perspective, the work of Griffiths and Dubksy (2012) suggests that undertaking the NA SENCO enables practitioners to develop a theoretical understanding with regards to inclusive education, therefore providing a basis from which they can develop into strategic leaders. A final consideration relates to after the NA SENCO is completed, and how the positive aspects of undertaking the training as described by SENCOs may be continued (Dobson and Douglas, 2020a) indicating that sustaining the learning and networks developed during the award may be a positive factor for the SENCO (Curran, 2019b).

### The SENCO role; the potential to influence inclusive policy

It is unequivocal that the SENCO is expected to lead the school strategically (DfE and DoH, 2015). Furthermore the notion of leading strategically links directly to the development of an inclusive ethos within settings, with the SEND Code of Practice stating that the 'UK Government is committed to inclusive education of disabled children and young people and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education' (DfE and DoH, 2015: 25). The NA SENCO Learning Outcomes state that the award should 'enable SENCOs to develop and demonstrate the personal and professional qualities and leadership they need to shape an ethos and culture based upon person-centred, inclusive, practice in which the interests and needs of children and young people pupils with SEN and/or disabilities are at the heart of all that takes place' (NCTL, 2014 p. 8).

Yet, it could be argued that one of the key challenges a SENCO may face is that the SEND Code of Practice does not state a definition of inclusion and no longer makes reference to the

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education's Index for Inclusion (CSIE, 2014; DfE and DoH, 2015). The idea of inclusion remains tenuous and open to debate; the concept of inclusion will mean different things to different people at different times and in different contexts (Glazzard et al., 2015). Whilst this does pose a challenge for the SENCO, it does also present a unique opportunity to explore and define inclusion within their own settings (Curran, 2019b). Hodkinson suggests that 'a school or college's approach to inclusion depends upon its teachers' attitudes and professional competencies' (2019 p. 115). Equally, Lehane (2016) argues that teaching assistants, often a key element of provision for SEN, in part form their interpretation of inclusion on their relationship with the teachers that they work with. This further supports the earlier discussion regarding the importance of developing teacher understanding in relation to their roles and responsibilities regarding not only provision for children with SEN, but also inclusion in general.

It is evident that developing a whole school ethos towards inclusion is a collective approach between all stakeholders. However, both Pearson (2008) and Morewood (2012) draw attention to the conflict of having an individual responsible for a group of learners, which by definition is separatist. Smith and Broomhead echo this sentiment with their research suggesting that a common issue relates to how responsibility for SEN is perceived in schools, with 'the assumption from staff that the responsibility for children with SEN was that solely of the SENCO' (2019 p. 63) further stating that the development of a whole school ethos towards inclusion is a collective responsibility. This therefore perhaps further exemplifies Tissot's (2013) suggestion that leadership is central to affecting cultural change; leadership to support the development of collective responsibility.

Certainly, the idea of a SENCO as leading on inclusive policy is intrinsic when considering that the construction of inclusive policy is co-dependent on various stakeholders (Simplican et al., 2015). The SENCO has the potential to influence inclusive educational practices, with Hallett and Hallett suggest that 'it is clear that best practice has the role of the SENCO at the heart of the education processes occurring within a setting' (2017, p. 2). Through their activities it could be argued that a key part of the SENCO role is 'recruit[ing] others to the possibilities of policy' (Ball et al., 2012 p. 60), a policy actor role Ball would refer to this as *policy enthusiasts*. This is defined as someone who advocates for particular policies, in a similar way to an entrepreneur, yet enthusiasts do not simply advocate for a particular policy, they lead by example, ensuring the policy is embedded in their practice (Ball et al., 2012). The embodiment is not only necessarily through work practices, but also wider events and processes which enable the policy enthusiasts to share and translate for others, thus making it a practical, productive process (Ball et al., 2012). This reflects the view of Alisauskas and colleagues (2011) who suggest that a focus on inclusion in a school is capacity building, therefore highlighting the potential impact of SENCO activities on the wider school.

Yet SENCOs are not merely implementing SEN policy within their settings, they are constructing it (Hellawell, 2019), which indicates that the SENCO role, whilst broad, is equally

emphatic regarding the importance it has regarding the development of inclusive policy. The construction of SEN policy does not take place in isolation. A further tension relates to the positioning of the SEN and inclusion policy agenda against other educational priorities. Norwich suggests that the SEND system is 'interdependent' on the general educational system which encompasses 'the National Curriculum and assessment, school inspection, the governance of schools and equality legislation' (2014, p. 404). Yet there are also tensions between the inclusion agenda and the standards agenda (Norwich, 2014). As a result, teachers may, in practice, experience conflicting and uncomfortable emotions about the daily practice of inclusion (Norwich, 2008). This further positions the SENCO within the advocacy role, for pupils and families, in relation to school and national educational policy. Certainly, with the sharper focus on the importance of pupil and family voice, and specifically the importance of developing a collaborative approach to support (Pearson, Mitchell and Rapti, 2015; DfE and DoH, 2015), the development of the voice of the SENCO within the wider educational agenda is imperative.

### The SENCO role; developing resilience within the role

It is evident that the SENCO role has the potential to enact multiple policy actor roles concurrently (Curran, 2019a), indicating the potential to effect change and influence school practices, but equally demonstrating the need to have a continual drive to do so despite the aforementioned challenges. Robertson might argue that the SENCOs' ability to establish and execute the role despite these issues illustrates their 'resilience and capacity' (2012 p. 82). In addition to this, it could be argued that such resilience is connected to the reasons why teachers move into the SENCO role initially, which Dobson and Douglas (2020b) suggest include: a drive to improve inclusion through developing high quality provision, to develop new skills through professional development and to develop as a school leader. Certainly, it could be argued that to be an effective SENCO there needs to be a commitment to securing positive outcomes for children, with the view that this may encompass challenging and changing school structures (Mackenzie, 2012). Reid and Soan's (2019) work concurred, citing positive outcomes for children at the heart of a SENCOs' commitment and motivation. The work of Mackenzie (2012) equally found that 'situated factors, professional factors and personal factors, as well as the 'urge to serve', all interact to enable people to be resilient across a teaching lifetime' (2012 p. 159).

Despite the resilience displayed by SENCOs (Mackenzie, 2012) it is important to consider the potential impact that the role can have on SENCO, both professionally and personally, with Szwed (2007) suggesting that the role has the potential for being overburdened. The National SENCO Workload Survey suggested that approximately a third of SENCOs do not see themselves in the role in five years' time, citing reasons relates to workload (Curran et al., 2018). Dobson and Douglas (2020b) highlight the financial impact that this has on schools in terms of training, indicating a need to consider how to retain SENCOs in post. As a

result, it is important to consider SENCO resilience, and the interplay between workload and the impact of 'ethical dilemmas' and 'moral conflicts' (Hellawell, 2019 p.74) which SENCOs may experience whilst implementing the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) within their setting.

Bodenheimer and Shuster highlight that teaching 'does not occur in a social vacuum' and further note the impact of 'emotional labour' on the teacher (2019 p. 72). Whilst their work refers to teachers in a generic sense, it could be hypothesised that the SENCO experiences a specific type and amount of emotional labour, due to the requirements of their role which consequently may impact on their resilience. Stith and Roth (2010) draw our attention to the socially dynamic classroom, and the actors within this, specifically the students and the teachers, all of these elements related to emotional impact, the complexity of decision making, and yet the SENCO role is further set apart from teaching colleagues due to the breadth of interactions with other parties; parents, multi-agencies, local authority colleagues.

Part of the SENCO role, perhaps not explicitly articulated in the statutory guidance (DfE and DoH, 2015), is the ability to sensitively manage and respond to diverse situations, something Sipman and colleagues would describe as 'pedagogical tact' which 'concerns a teacher's ability to adequately handle complex classroom situations that require immediate action' (2019 p.1186). Certainly, as argued by Edwards (2016) the SENCO role requires good interpersonal skills. This builds on Kearns (2005) view of the SENCO as a someone who rescues and collaborates, as well as concurrently being viewed by others as an expert (Smith and Broomhead, 2019). However, it could be argued that the emotional labour referred to by Bodenheimer and Shuster (2019) equally refers to the moral and ethical responsibility associated with the role.

As Hellawell states, 'the field of SEND is riddled with ethical dilemmas' (2019 p. 74). It could be argued that measures of accountability for children have gained prominence through SEN legislation (Children and Families Act, 2014; DfE and DoH, 2015). Hodgkinson states that 'inclusion has become defined and controlled by the government's agents of accountability, performativity and standards' (2019 p.109), with Hellawell (2019) suggesting that SEN leaders experience multiple accountabilities, including both professional and moral.

Therefore, due to the potential impact on the SENCO, both personally and professionally, consideration should be given to the way in which the SENCO is supported. SENCOs are frequently engaged in decision making and prioritising. They concurrently work with, and advocate for, individuals in complex situations. Kennedy and Laverick, when discussing the role of inclusion leaders, specifically head teachers, highlight the multifaceted role which requires leaders to make complex decisions, with 'flexibility, focused effort and advocacy' (2019 p. 446). It has been argued that SENCOs should be able to access supervision 'to

enable them to reflect on decision making... to support SENCOs with the complex and challenging situations they are frequently working with' (Curran et al., 2019b p. 6).

Supervision is an activity which has the potential to help support and maintain SENCO resilience. Recent work by Kennedy and Laverick (2019) explored the potential for supervision for headteachers, in relation to supporting children with SEN, noting that supervision offers time and space to articulate issues and emotions, explore and consider solutions; the product of such an activity has the potential to lead to a more inclusive environment. It would therefore seem appropriate to apply this to those who are 'responsible for the day to day operation of the SEN policy' (DfE and DoH, 2015 p. 108). Research undertaken by Reid and Soan (2019) also discuss the potential for clinical supervision for SENCOs, where the purpose was to provide 'opportunity to reflect on, air and discuss professional practice issues in a confidential setting' (2019, p. 61). Reid and Soan's work further suggested that access to formal supervision enabled individuals to feel that they could maintain a balance between work and home, whilst feeling that they were remaining an effective practitioner, they claim that 'clinical supervision could be a valuable tool to help build professional resilience' (2019 p. 71).

Whilst supervision is not currently standard practice, there are emerging models (Morewood, 2018) which broadly draw upon the skills of senior leaders within the setting to provide such opportunities. It could be argued that the ability to share concerns and reflect upon decision making, whether this is through formal supervision or not, has advantages. Howard and Johnson's research indicates that a 'strong support group (including a competent and caring leadership team)' is a feature of helping develop, and maintain, teacher resilience (2004 p. 415). Yet, the SENCO is in a unique position in school, in that it is typically a solitary role (Curran et al., 2018). Therefore, in terms of developing support, and the potential impact that this can have on resilience, it may be prudent for SENCOs to consider how they develop their networks of support outside of their settings.

SENCO networks are facilitated through various channels, including local authorities, the NA SENCO and, more recently, the changing structure of the educational system, specifically Multi-Academy Trusts. This infers that there is opportunity for SENCOs to develop networks, an area Pearson and colleagues (2015) suggested would increase post SEND reform. Whilst the previous focus may have been using such networks to share good practice and resources (DfE, 2016), as well as collaboratively delivering CPD (Greenwood and Kelly, 2017), it is a possibility that SENCOs could offer informal supervision-type support (Curran, 2019b).

## Conclusion

The role of the SENCO holds a unique role in schools. The SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) stipulates the potential responsibilities of the role, including both operational

and strategic aspects, stating that the 'SENCO has day to day responsibility for the operation of SEN policy' and 'has an important role to play... in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in the school' (DfE and DoH, 2015 p.108). It is also notable that the SENCO holds a key position within the school with regards to leading the development of inclusive policy in schools (Hallett and Hallett, 2017; Tissot, 2013), and has potential to be a powerful agent of change (Robertson, 2012; Qureshi, 2014).

However, research has indicated that the interpretation, and the facilitation, of the role is varied in different settings (Hallett and Hallett, 2017; Curran et al., 2018; Smith and Broomhead, 2019), which in turn has led to a role which is considered broad and complex (Qureshi, 2014; Smith and Broomhead, 2019). There are a number of factors which have impacted on this variance, but most specifically it has been the local interpretation of national guidance (Dobson and Douglas, 2020a) which does not detail how to specifically facilitate the role (DfE and DoH, 2015; Lehane, 2016). This has led to concerns that the SENCO does not have sufficient time or status to fulfil the demands of the role (Curran et al., 2018).

Yet, despite these reported challenges, it is evident that the SENCO has the potential to be an agent of change and to have a positive impact on developing and furthering inclusive practice in their school settings. Whilst acknowledging that the development of an inclusive environment is a collective enterprise (Hokinson, 2019), the SENCO is able to assume varying policy actor roles (Ball et al., 2012) including that of policy narrator and enthusiast, using policy to create 'clout', and therefore change, in relation to their role and their setting (Curran, 2019a p. 19). The benefit of such an approach is that capacity is built within the school, and therefore increases the collective inclusive ethos (Alisauskas et al., 2011).

However, to ensure that the SENCO is able to develop and maintain resilience within their role it is imperative that they have access to appropriate support (Howard and Johnson, 2004). This is particularly important due to the impact that the role can have on the individual, both professionally and personally (Hellawell, 2019), but also because of the financial cost to schools in terms of ensuring there is an appropriately qualified SENCO (Dobson and Douglas, 2020b). Effective support mechanisms includes access to supervision and increased access to networks (Greenwood and Kelly, 2017; Morewood, 2018). This, alongside policy, has the potential to develop SENCO resilience.

In conclusion, it is worth reflecting on the reasons why SENCOs come into the profession. SENCOs demonstrate themselves to be resilient (Mackenzie, 2012) and committed professionals (Reid and Soan, 2019), who whilst undertaking the role for reasons related to professional development, primarily do so due to their commitment and motivation with regards to securing positive outcomes for children with additional needs (Reid and Soan, 2019; Dobson and Douglas, 2020b). As a consequence, the effective facilitation and support

of this unique role in school has the capacity to secure positive change for all involved with inclusive education.

## References

Allan, J. and Youdell, D. (2015) 'Ghostings, materialisations and flows in Britain's Special Educational Needs and Disability assemblage', *Discourse: Students in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 30 (1), pp. 70-82.

Ališauskas, A., Ališauskiene, S., Kairiene, D. and Jones, S. (2011) 'Meeting of Pupils' Special Needs in the Context of Inclusive Education: UK Experience', *Special Education*, 1, pp. 91-104.

Ball, S., Maguire, M., Braun, A. and Hoskins, K. (2011) 'Policy actors: doing policy work in schools: some necessary but insufficient analyses', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 32 (4), pp. 625-639.

Ball, S., Maguire, M. and Braun, A. (2012) *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Barnes, P. (2008) 'Multi-agency working: what are the perspectives of SENCOs and parents regarding its development and implementation?', *British Journal of Special Education*, 35(4), pp. 230-240.

Bodenheimer, G. and Shuster, S. M. (2020) 'Emotional Labour, Teaching and Burnout: Investigating Complex Relationships', *Educational Research*, 62(1), pp. 63-76.

Bowers, T., Dee, L., and West, M. (1998) 'The Code in action: some school perceptions of its user-friendliness', *Support for Learning*, 13 (3), pp. 99-104.

Brown, J. and Doveston, M. (2014) 'Short sprint or an endurance test: the perceived impact of the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination', *Teacher Development*, 18(4), pp. 495-510.

Centre of Studies for Inclusive Education (2014) *What is Inclusion?* <http://www.csie.org.uk/>  
Available at: <http://www.csie.org.uk/inclusion/what.shtml> (Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> March 2015).

*Children and Families Act 2014*, c. 6. Available at:  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/pdfs/ukpga\\_20140006\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/pdfs/ukpga_20140006_en.pdf) (Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014).

Cole, B. A. (2005) 'Mission Impossible? Special educational needs, inclusion and the re-conceptualisation of the role of the SENCo in England and Wales', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 20 (3), pp. 287–307.

Cowne, E. (2005) *The SENCO Handbook: Working within a Whole-school Approach*. 5<sup>th</sup> edn. Abingdon: David Fulton.

Cooc, N. (2019) 'Teaching students with special needs: International trends in school capacity and the need for teacher professional development', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 83, pp. 27–41.

Curran, H. (2019a) "'The SEND Code of Practice has given me clout": a phenomenological study illustrating how SENCos managed the introduction of the SEND reforms', *British Journal of Special Education*, (1), p. 76.

Curran, H. (2019b) *How to be a Brilliant SENCO: Practical strategies for developing and leading inclusion provision* Abingdon: Routledge

Curran, H., Moloney, H., Heavey, A. and Boddison, A. (2018) *It's about time: The impact of SENCO workload on the professional and the school* Bath Spa University. Available at:  
<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/education/research/senco-workload/> (Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019).

Department for Education (DfE) (2016) *Educational Excellence Everywhere*. (Cm 9230). Available at:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508447/Educational\\_Excellence\\_Everywhere.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508447/Educational_Excellence_Everywhere.pdf) (Accessed 13th April 2016).

Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DoH) (2015) *Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0- 25 years*. Available at:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/398815/SEND\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_January\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf) (Accessed: 1st February 2015).

Dobson, G. J. and Douglas, G. (2020a) 'Who would do that role? Understanding why teachers become SENCos through an ecological systems theory', *Educational Review*, 72(3), pp. 298–318.

Dobson, G. J. and Douglas, G. (2020b) Factors influencing the career interest of SENCOs in English schools. Available at:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1002%2Fberj.3631>

(Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020)

Edwards, S. (2016) *The SENCO survival guide: the nuts and bolts of everything you need to know*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn. Abingdon: Routledge

Ekins, A. (2012) *The Changing Face of Special Educational Needs: Impact and implications for SENCOs and their schools*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Garner, P. (1996) 'Go forth and coordinate!' What special needs coordinators think about the code of practice', *School Organisation*, 16 (2), pp. 179 - 186.

Glazzard, J., Stokoe, J., Hughes, A., Netherwood, A. and Neve, L. (2015) *Teaching And Supporting Children With Special Educational Needs And Disabilities In Primary Schools*. London: Learning Matters.

Greenwood, J. and Kelly, C. (2017) 'Implementing Cycles of Assess, Plan, Do, Review: A Literature Review of Practitioner Perspectives', *British Journal of Special Education*, 44(4), pp. 394–410.

Griffiths, D. and Dubsky, R. (2012) 'Evaluating the impact of the new National Award for SENCOs: transforming landscapes or gardening in a gale?' *British Journal of Special Education*, 39 (4), pp. 164-172.

Hallett, F. and Hallett, G. (eds.) (2017) *Transforming the role of the SENCO: achieving the national award for SEN coordination*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn. London: Oxford University Press.

Hellawell, B. (2019) *Understanding and challenging the SEND Code of Practice*. London: Sage

Hodkinson, A. (2019) *Key Issues in Special Educational Needs and Inclusion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn. London: Sage

Howard, S. and Johnson, B. (2004) 'Resilient teachers: Resisting stress and burnout', *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, 7(4), pp. 399–420.

Kearns, H. (2005) 'Exploring the Experiential Learning of Special Educational Needs Coordinators', *Journal Of In-Service Education*, 31 (1), pp. 131- 150.

Kennedy, E.-K. and Laverick, L. (2019) 'Leading Inclusion in Complex Systems: experiences of relational supervision for headteachers', *Support for Learning*, (4), p. 443 - 459.

Layton, L. (2005) 'Special educational needs coordinators and leadership: a role too far?' *Support for Learning*, 20 (2), pp. 53-59.

Lehane, T. (2016) "'SEN's completely different now": critical discourse analysis of three "Codes of Practice for Special Educational Needs" (1994, 2001, 2015)', *Educational Review*, 69 (1) pp. 51-67.

Mackenzie, S. (2007) 'A review of recent developments in the role of the SENCo in the UK', *British Journal of Special Education*, 34 (4), pp. 212-218.

Mackenzie, S. (2012) 'I can't imagine doing anything else': why do teachers of children with SEN remain in the profession? Resilience, rewards and realism over time', *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 12(3), pp. 151-161.

Morewood, G. (2012) 'Is the "Inclusive SENCo" Still a Possibility? A Personal Perspective', *Support for Learning*, 27 (2), pp. 73-76.

Morewood, G. (2018) Establishing a model for SENCO supervision. Available at: <https://blog.optimus-education.com/establishing-model-senco-supervision>

(Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020)

National College of Teaching and Learning (2014) *National Award for Special Educational Needs Co-ordination: Learning Outcomes*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/354172/nasc-learning-outcomes-final.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/354172/nasc-learning-outcomes-final.pdf) (Accessed 1st September 2014).

Norwich, B. (2008) *Dilemmas of difference, inclusion and disability: international perspectives and future directions*. London: Routledge.

Norwich, B. (2014) 'Changing policy and legislation and its effects on inclusive and special education: a perspective from England', *British Journal of Special Education*, 41 (4), pp. 40.

Pearson, S. (2008) 'Deafened by silence or by the sound of footsteps? An investigation of the recruitment, induction and retention of special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) in England', *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 8 (2), pp. 96-110.

Pearson, S. (2010) 'The role of Special Educational Needs Co-coordinators (SENCOs): 'To be or not to be'', *Psychology of Education Review*, 34 (2), pp. 30-38.

Pearson, S., Mitchell, R. and Rapti, M. (2015) 'I Will Be 'Fighting' Even More for Pupils with SEN: SENCOs' Role Predictions in the Changing English Policy Context', *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 15 (1), pp. 48-56.

Qureshi, S. (2014) 'Herding cats or getting heard: The SENCo-teacher dynamic and its impact on teachers' classroom practice', *Support for Learning*, 29 (3), pp. 217-229.

Reid, H. and Soan, S. (2019) 'Providing Support to Senior Managers in Schools via "Clinical" Supervision: A Purposeful, Restorative Professional and Personal Developmental Space', *Professional Development in Education*, 45(1), pp. 59–72.

Robertson, C. (2012) 'Special educational needs and disability co-ordination in a changing policy landscape: making sense of policy from a SENCo's perspective', *Support for Learning*, 27 (2), pp. 77-83.

Rosen-Webb, S. (2011) 'Nobody tells you how to be a SENCo', *British Journal of Special Education*, 38 (4), pp. 159-168.

Simplican, S., Leader, G., Kosciulek, J. and Leahy, M. (2015.) 'Review article: Defining social inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities: An ecological model of social networks and community participation', *Research in developmental disabilities*, 38, pp. 18-29.

Sipman, G., Tholke, J., Martens, R. and McKenny, S. (2019) 'The Role of Intuition in Pedagogical Tact: Educator Views', *British Educational Research Journal*, 45(6), pp. 1186–1202.

Smith, M. D. and Broomhead, K. E. (2019) 'Time, expertise and status: barriers faced by mainstream primary school SENCOs in the pursuit of providing effective provision for children with SEND', *Support for Learning*, 34(1), pp. 54–70.

Soan, S. (2017) *The SENCO essential manual*. London: Oxford University Press

Stith, I. and Roth, W.-M. (2010) 'Teaching as mediation: The cogenerative dialogue and ethical understandings', *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 26(2), pp. 363–370.

Szwed, C. (2007) 'Reconsidering the role of the primary special educational needs co-ordinator: policy, practice and future priorities', *British Journal of Special Education*, 34 (2), pp. 96-104.

*The Education (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) (England) Regulations 2008* (SI 2008/ 2945). Available at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10702/4/SI%202008%201945.pdf> (Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013).

*The Education (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009* (SI 2009/ 1387). Available at:  
[http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10702/5/uksi\\_20091387\\_en.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10702/5/uksi_20091387_en.pdf) (Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013).

Tissot, C. (2013) 'The role of SENCOs as leaders', *British Journal of Special Education*, 40 (1), pp. 33-40.

Wall, K., Van Herwegen, J., Shaw, A., Russell, A. and Roberts, A. (2019) *A study of the drivers, demand and supply for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)- related continuing professional development (CPD) for school staff*. Available at:  
[file:///Users/helencurran/Downloads/drivers\\_demand\\_supply\\_report.2019%20\(5\).pdf](file:///Users/helencurran/Downloads/drivers_demand_supply_report.2019%20(5).pdf)

(Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020)

Whole school SEND (2020) *Effective SENCO deployment: a guide for the SENCOs and their line managers*. Available at:  
[file:///Users/helencurran/Downloads/effective\\_senco\\_deployment\\_web%20\(3\).pdf](file:///Users/helencurran/Downloads/effective_senco_deployment_web%20(3).pdf)

(Accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020)