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# Special Educational Needs (Information) Bill: Committee Stage Report

This is a report on the Committee Stage of the Special Educational Needs (Information) Bill, Bill 26 of 2007/08. The report has been produced in response to a recommendation of the Modernisation Committee in its report on *The Legislative Process* (HC 1097, 2005-06).

The Bill is sponsored by Sharon Hodgson, who drew second place in the 2007/08 ballot for Private Members' Bills. It was presented on 5 December 2007.

The Bill would require the Secretary of State to collect and publish information about children with special educational needs that would assist in improving the well-being of such children. Well-being is defined in line with the *Every Child Matters* outcomes – be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

The Bill received cross-party support and had its Second Reading on 1 February 2008. It was considered in Public Bill Committee on 12 March 2008, and was not amended. The Report Stage is due on 16 May 2008.

Christine Gillie

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## Summary of main points

The *Special Educational Needs (Information) Bill* is a Private Member's Bill introduced by Sharon Hodgson with cross-party support, and support from charitable organisations across the education sector. It was presented on 5 December 2007. The Government supports the Bill, which received a Second Reading on 1 February 2008.

The Bill seeks to amend the *Education Act 1996* to make two substantive changes. The first requires the Secretary of State to exercise certain of his powers with a view to securing special needs information which would, in his opinion, be likely to assist him or other persons in improving the well-being of children with special educational needs in England. (For the purposes of the Bill a 'child' means a person under the age of 19 years.) The second change would oblige the Secretary of State to publish in each calendar year, or arrange for publication, special needs information which has been obtained under the Act where, in his opinion, this would be likely to assist him or other persons in improving the well-being of children with special educational needs in England.

The Bill was considered in Public Bill Committee on 12 March 2008, and was reported without amendment. Specific issues raised in Committee included training courses in SEN for teachers and assistants, the availability of published information on SEN at school or local authority level, information on SEN laid before and debated in Parliament, the need for information to help parents find the right school for their child and the quality of current information and advice.

The Report Stage is due on 16 May 2008.



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## I Provisions of the Bill

The *Special Educational Needs (Information) Bill* is a Private Member's Bill introduced by Sharon Hodgson with cross-party support, and support from charitable organisations across the education sector. It was presented on 5 December 2007.<sup>1</sup>

Library Research Paper 08/10<sup>2</sup>, which was written for the Second Reading debate, provides background information on the statutory framework for meeting special educational needs (SEN), describes the current arrangements for data collection and the publication of information on SEN, and highlights some current issues relating to SEN provision generally.

The Library's Bill gateway web pages provide information on the progress of the Bill and links to relevant information.<sup>3</sup>

Explanatory Notes on the Bill were provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, with the consent of Sharon Hodgson MP, and are copied below:

### EXPLANATORY NOTES INTRODUCTION

1. These explanatory notes relate to the Special Educational Needs (Information) Bill as introduced in the House of Commons on 5th December 2007. They have been provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, with the consent of Sharon Hodgson MP, the Member in charge of the Bill, in order to assist the reader of the Bill and to help inform debate on it. They do not form part of the Bill and have not been endorsed by Parliament.

2. The notes need to be read in conjunction with the Bill. They are not, and are not meant to be, a comprehensive description of the Bill. So where a clause or part of a clause does not seem to require any explanation or comment, none is given.

The Bill makes two substantive provisions by amending the Education Act 1996.

4. Firstly, it requires the Secretary of State to exercise certain of his powers under that Act with a view to securing the provision of information about children in England with special educational needs that would be likely to assist in improving the well-being of children in England with special educational needs.

5. Secondly, the Bill requires the Secretary of State to publish, or arrange to be published, information about children in England with special educational needs, the publication of which would be likely to assist in improving the well-being of these children.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmbills/026/2008026.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://pims.parliament.uk:81/PIMS/Static%20Files/Extended%20File%20Scan%20Files/LIBRARY\\_OTHER\\_PAPERS/RESEARCH\\_PAPER/RP08-010.pdf](http://pims.parliament.uk:81/PIMS/Static%20Files/Extended%20File%20Scan%20Files/LIBRARY_OTHER_PAPERS/RESEARCH_PAPER/RP08-010.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://hcl1.hclibrary.parliament.uk/parliament/bills/gateways.asp>

## TERRITORIAL EXTENT

6. The Bill extends to England and Wales but applies to children in England only. The Bill does not extend to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

7. Because the Sewel Convention provides that Westminster will not normally legislate with regard to devolved matters in Scotland without the consent of the Scottish Parliament, if there are amendments relating to such matters which trigger the Convention, the consent of the Scottish Parliament will be sought for them.

## COMMENTARY ON CLAUSES

8. Clause 1 of the Bill amends the Education Act 1996 by the insertion of three sections.

9. The first inserted section, section 332C, requires the Secretary of State to exercise his "relevant powers" with a view to securing, in particular, the provision of information about children in England with special educational needs which would, in his opinion, be likely to assist him or others, such as local authorities or schools, in improving the well-being of children in England with special educational needs.

10. The "relevant powers" are defined in subsection (2) and are all contained within the Education Act 1996. They relate mainly to the acquisition of information from schools and local education authorities, though sometimes other persons can be required to provide information (head teachers, those who collate information, etc).

11. The clause does not list the range of mechanisms by which information could assist in improving well-being but these could include:

- a) allowing the Secretary of State, local authorities and schools to monitor and evaluate whether policies and programmes were effective and thus inform any policy changes;
- b) enabling local authorities to plan better for provision to meet the needs of children with special educational needs; and
- c) enabling local authorities which are improving well-being or planning effectively to be identified and to spread good practice to others.

12. The second inserted section, section 332D, requires the Secretary of State in each calendar year to publish, or arrange to be published, information about children in England with special educational needs which has been obtained under the Education Act 1996, the publication of which would, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, be likely to assist him, or others such as local authorities and schools, in improving the well-being of these children.

13. The information can be published in a form, and in a way, that the Secretary of State considers appropriate but he may not publish the names of children to whom the information relates (subsection (2)). The Secretary of State may make, or arrange for the making of, a charge to cover the cost of any documents supplied (subsection (3)).

14. The final section inserted by this clause, section 332E, defines the terms "child", "special needs information" and "well-being". The definition of well-being reflects the Every Child Matters (Cm 5860) outcomes as set out in section 10 of



the Children Act 2004: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being (see <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/>).

15. Clause 2 of the Bill contains provisions on the short title, commencement and extent of the Bill.

#### FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF THE BILL

16. The financial effects of the Bill will be minor. The costs of the Bill will be assessed fully once decisions are taken on the changes to information collected and published about children with special educational needs. No additional expenditure should fall on the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund as a consequence of this Bill.

#### EFFECTS OF THE BILL ON PUBLIC SECTOR MANPOWER

17. There are no public sector commitments arising from the Bill which would give rise to additional manpower requirements.

#### SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

18. The Department for Children Schools and Families has assessed the impact of the Bill and concluded that any costs will be minor and fall on the public sector. Based on the evidence provided to them, the Better Regulation Executive is content in these circumstances that a full impact assessment is not needed. A copy of the equality impact assessment will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and made available on the Department for Children Schools and Families' website.

#### COMMENCEMENT

19. Clause 1 of the Bill will be brought into force by a commencement order made by the Secretary of State. Clause 2 comes into force on the day on which the Bill receives Royal Assent.

## II Second Reading in the House of Commons

The Bill was introduced with cross-party support and received a Second Reading on 1 February 2008.<sup>4</sup> During the Second Reading debate the Minister said that the Government supported the Bill.

The following highlights some of the issues raised in what was a wide-ranging debate on SEN. It is not intended to be a summary of all points made or of all individual contributions. Members are advised to consult the debate if they wish to check whether particular subjects were raised or what was said by individual Members.

Introducing the Bill, Sharon Hodgson talked about why she had chosen this policy area, what the Bill will do, and how she believed it could help over time to make a difference to

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<sup>4</sup> HC Deb 1 February 2008 cc 558-612

SEN provision. She spoke about the experiences of her child, Joseph, who had delayed speech and reading difficulties as a young child but was not diagnosed as dyslexic and statemented until he was 10 years old.

She highlighted how SEN provision can vary across the county, recalling that when her family had lived in Gateshead her son had received speech therapy but that that support stopped when they moved to London. She said that the problem she had encountered was not only patchy SEN provision but also the problem of obtaining good quality information. Answers to her parliamentary questions revealed a lack of information collected centrally. (Later in the debate another Member also referred to the lack of information given in some parliamentary answers.) Mrs Hodgson quoted the report of the charity, TreeHouse. It had found a lack of information about autism and had called on the Government to review the data currently collected to enable access to information about different types of SEN, to assist in the understanding of the type of needs there are, and to help local authorities plan to meet those needs. Mrs Hodgson noted the report on SEN by the Education and Skills Select Committee. She referred to many areas that could be improved; in particular, she highlighted the need for more training to enable teachers to recognise a range of SEN and to provide a degree of specialist support, noting that this was something about which dyslexia charities were campaigning. She hoped that the issue could be addressed in committee, and said that it could be dealt with under guidelines.

Mrs Hodgson acknowledged that there is already a 'whole host of data sets and statistics' on SEN children in schools, but she believed that by encouraging further analysis of existing data, and annual publication of new information, 'a moving image that reflects changes in provision for and progress of SEN pupils' could be built up. She said that expectations for children with SEN and their achievement levels could be raised only by monitoring outcomes. Wherever possible, she said, the burdens on teachers should not be increased, and that it would be sensible to use the Ofsted review of SEN in 2009-10 to inform the Government of what new information would be useful in achieving the requirements of the Bill. She noted that there were many children at 'school action' level of support whose needs are not categorised, and that their needs may go unmet.<sup>5</sup> To ensure that their needs are recognised and met, she argued that teachers need to be better trained in recognising SEN.

She acknowledged that the Government had recognised these needs in its *Removing Barriers to Achievement* report, and was committed to improving information on outcomes of pupils with SEN. However, while welcoming recent developments, she questioned whether enough was being done to train all teachers to recognise the most common forms of SEN. She also called on Ministers to extend the current categorisation of SEN to school action level under the School Census, so that information on this group would be collected alongside information on statemented children and children at the 'school action plus' level of support. She believed that by extending the recording of the type of SEN to the school action level, the onus would be placed on teachers to identify

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<sup>5</sup> For information about 'school action' and 'school action plus' support see Library Research Paper 08/10, which was prepared for the Second Reading debate on the Bill.

and consider more carefully the type of need a child has, rather than just acknowledging the existence of a need.

Mrs Hodgson drew on the comments of organisations that supported the Bill, particularly the Special Educational Consortium. She noted that while information can ‘help to pinpoint the patchwork quilt of SEN’, it will be action that makes the difference. Putting a statutory requirement on the Secretary of State, and those who follow him, to pay special consideration to improving outcomes will, she said, trigger action. She highlighted significant regional variations in provision, and believed that, by improving information, best practice could be identified and extended.

Other Members also spoke about their passion for wanting to improve the outcomes for children with SEN, about parents making informed choices, about the need for reviewing data held at local and national level (and in particular the collection of information about ‘school action’ support) and about special needs training for teachers including secondary teachers. Other issues raised included: provision for children with challenging behaviour and school exclusions; school admission policies and their effect on children with SEN; the potential resource implications of the Bill and the importance of not raising false expectations; the need for information about the early identification of children with SEN; the role and qualifications of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs); the availability of educational psychologists; teaching assistants; funding SEN and the issue of what proportion of education funding should be spent on special needs. Policies for inclusion, the need for flexibility in provision, and the role of SEN statementing were also raised. The significance of the Bill’s provisions for influencing national policy and long-term planning was noted. One Member recalled that the Select Committee had recently heard evidence from various statisticians and educationalists who all agreed that additional data, particularly on SEN, would be hugely useful, especially in assessing the progress of pupils, and the relative success of different types of school systems.

Some Members focused their comments on the needs of, and provision for, particular categories of children with SEN, including children who are dyslexic, autistic, deaf and hearing impaired, and children who have speech and language difficulties.

Kevin Brennan, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families commented on the Bill and the debate on it. He added his congratulations to Mrs Hodgson for introducing the Bill, and said the Government supported the sentiments that she expressed. While noting that it was not his role to respond to the debate as the Bill had been introduced by Mrs Hodgson, he referred to the contributions made in the debate. He set out the Government’s position on the Bill as follows:

Professionals need good quality information so they can share what works, put right what does not work and ensure that each child receives the right type of support. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East and Washington, West will know, my Department already gathers data on children with SEN from a number of sources, including the school census and the SEN2 survey. Those data are published annually and provide useful information from individual pupil to local authority level. I am committed to looking at anything that will help children

further—over and above what we are already doing—and formalising the Secretary of State's consideration of children with SEN when gathering data is a sensible suggestion. For that reason, I am happy to tell the House that the Government will support the Bill.<sup>6</sup>

The Minister then went on to outline the steps the Government had already taken to improve the quality and use of data collected on SEN.

Annette Brooke asked the Minister if the Government was looking at 'kitemarking' to spread good practice between local authorities and schools, perhaps across the whole range of special educational needs. The Minister said that he would look into this.<sup>7</sup> On the issue raised by Mrs Hodgson about extending data collection to school action level, the Minister pointed out that at present there is no external moderation of information at this level because external bodies only become involved at school action plus level and above. For that reason, he said he was concerned that the data may not be of the highest quality but that he would consider with colleagues whether such information would be useful.<sup>8</sup>

Another matter raised was collecting data on the qualifications of SENCOs. The Minister said that the Training and Development Agency for Schools was looking into the development of nationally accredited arrangements for new appointees to the SENCO role but that the work was at a very early stage. Responding to a separate point, the Minister said that the Government was looking at how data can be collected on the number of children with disabilities as distinct from SEN, and that it had commissioned research on the identification of pupils with disabilities. In response to questions about why certain conditions, such as dyslexia, were not listed in the SEN framework, the Minister referred to the Ofsted's review of SEN, and said that the Government would consider in the light of that review whether changes needed to be made to the present framework.<sup>9</sup>

### III Public Bill Committee

The Public Bill Committee (PBC) met on 12 March 2008.<sup>10</sup> Its membership is given in Appendix 1 below. There were no oral evidence-taking sessions and no written evidence was published by the Committee. (During the debate Members referred to briefings from various organisations that had been sent to individual Members of the Committee.) There were no amendments to the Bill in Committee. However, several amendments and a new clause were debated and then withdrawn. Members from opposition parties made it clear that they supported the Bill and that their motivation in tabling amendments was to ensure that the Bill would be effective.

The summary, below, of the main issues raised is not intended to be a summary of all points made or of all individual contributions. Members are advised to consult the

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<sup>6</sup> HC Deb 1 February 2008 c609

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, c610

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, c611

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, c612

<sup>10</sup> Public Bill Committee (Bill 26), 2007-08, 12 March 2008

debate if they wish to check whether particular subjects were raised or what was said by individual Members.

**a. *Teacher training and SEN***

Two probing amendments tabled by the Liberal Democrats, and one by the Conservatives, were aimed at requiring in clause 1 specific information on the content, nature and completion of training courses in respect to SEN for teachers and assistants. The Conservative amendment also sought to require the Secretary of State to collect information on how long the statementing process takes.

Annette Brooke (Liberal Democrat) said that the intention behind the amendment she had moved was to highlight the need to monitor how much training is taking place on SEN. She said that it was difficult to know how the Bill would operate in practice, and that as there was no specific mention of teacher training in the Bill she had wanted to raise the matter, and for it to be covered in some form, probably not in the Bill but in regulations, though she stressed that guidelines would not be sufficient. Another Liberal Democrat amendment related to existing teachers. Annette Brooke explained that she wanted the provisions to be as comprehensive as possible. It was not enough, she said, to know what was on offer, it was important to know about completion rates, broken down by local authority and school level in order to know exactly what courses teachers had undertaken. She noted that the British Dyslexia Association was calling for there to be at least one specialist teacher for dyslexia in each school. She also noted that many teachers do not seem to have an appreciation of some of the common characteristics of autism, and that basic training is needed throughout the school in relation to this.

Maria Miller (Conservative) said that she wanted to ensure that the provisions resulted in action at school level. She stressed that many children with SEN do not reach their full potential at school, and in particular she referred to a briefing by the Royal National Institute for Deaf People. Her amendment covered similar ground to the amendments tabled by the Liberal Democrats. She paid tribute to the work of the charity, TreeHouse, in establishing that there was a lack of information particularly on autism. She spoke about the statementing process and the problem of local authorities acting as 'poacher and gamekeeper' by assessing needs and granting statements, and also providing funding. She noted that the Education and Skills Select Committee had raised this potential conflict of interest, and she drew attention to proposals from the Conservatives' Special Educational Needs Commission.

Anne Snelgrove (Labour) said that while she had sympathy with the amendments it was important not to move the focus of the Bill from children to teachers.<sup>11</sup>

Kevin Brennan, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families noted the long-established principle that primary legislation is not the place in which specific requirements are made of the Secretary of State in respect of specific information, because of the inflexibility that that creates. The Minister also stressed the need to consider carefully the burden placed on schools, local authorities and other

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, c8

data providers. He then went on to set out in detail why he thought that it was better not to include in the Bill the specific requirements proposed in the amendments.<sup>12</sup>

Mrs Hodgson said that while she appreciated the aims behind the amendments, she did not think that they could work in the Bill. She believed that the various matters raised could be covered in regulations or guidelines, as appropriate. Referring to new data collection requirements, she said that care needed to be taken not to unduly burden teachers with extra paper work. Mrs Hodgson felt that monitoring the time the statementing process took was not a necessary addition to the Bill. It would not, she said, solve issues such as who is given a statement or the efficiency of the appeals process, and she noted that there were already arrangements to have information on the proportion of statements issued within the 26-week time limit.<sup>13</sup>

Mrs Hodgson acknowledged that the provisions in the Bill would increase the administrative burden, and said that the Government would have to look at the costs. But she noted that the Children's Plan had referred to better data on children with SEN, and she therefore thought that the Government must have put money aside for this.

Maria Miller said that as her amendment was probing she would not press it to a division.<sup>14</sup> Annette Brooke said that although she would withdraw her amendment she stressed that greater inclusion in mainstream schools should not have been introduced without addressing teacher training needs.<sup>15</sup>

**b. School and local authority level information on SEN**

Mrs Miller moved another amendment (subsequently withdrawn) to clause 1 to ensure that information would be broken down by individual school and individual LEA in England, provided that the names of children to whom the information relates was not included. She said that the duty under the amendment to collate the information would be placed on the Secretary of State not on schools. She felt that a breakdown of information at local level would be pivotal in identifying and spreading best practice between different areas. She noted that such data could be used to ensure that shortfalls in areas, such as teacher training, could be addressed before they became critical problems. The information would enable local authorities to identify gaps in continuous professional development or in recruitment at local level, for example.

Responding, the Minister said that the department was always looking at how it could make the data it publishes more relevant and usable. However, he said that there were data protection problems with the amendment's requirements that go beyond withholding names. Where there are few children with a given characteristic at a school or within a local authority, publishing information about a group of that size would give personal information about a small, identifiable group of children. Therefore, he did not believe that it would be appropriate for all the data held to be published at school or local

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, cc 14-15

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, cc 16-17

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, c19

authority level. He stressed that the department was looking at how it could make the data published more relevant:

As I said, the Department is, however, always looking at how we can make the data that we publish more relevant and useful. We will also look at what other avenues we can use to ensure that people have access as possible to as much of the data related to SEN that we hold. In particular, we have asked Her Majesty's chief inspector to undertake a review of SEN provision in 2009-10, and that review will include the collection and use of data to support the improvement of provision. We will of course look at our SEN data publications, as well as whether changes are necessary to the SEN framework and our information-gathering arrangements, in the light of the recommendations of Her Majesty's chief inspector.

The second part of the amendment says that we should provide schools and local authorities with the information that we publish. The Department already ensures that published information is available to schools and local authorities, and much of it has been provided directly by them through the school census and the SEN2 survey. In that sense, the amendment is otiose.

We continue to look at how we can encourage schools and local authorities to make use of their data to improve planning and evaluate provision. For example, during 2007, the national strategies SEN team, working with local authorities and the Department, developed a self-evaluation framework to help local authorities to benchmark their own performance across a range of indicators and, most importantly, to identify areas for review and action to bring about further improvement. I hope that those remarks are of assistance to my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East and Washington, West and to the Committee.<sup>16</sup>

Mrs Hodgson acknowledged that a wide range of data was already collected on SEN, and hoped that if the Bill became law it would increase the quantity and quality of data published at local level; however, she said that it would be dealt with under regulations and guidelines issued by the Secretary of State. She was concerned that publishing data at the school level would not ensure the anonymity of pupils. She noted that there were plans to review the information contained in the departmental statistical release on SEN, and she hoped that the Government would use the forthcoming Ofsted review of SEN to review current practice concerning the collection of data. She also hoped that data would be published at the local level unless the data sets were few in number, and she urged Mrs Miller to withdraw her amendment. Mrs Miller noted that there were areas of data deficits particularly in relation to teacher training that did not impinge on privacy issues. She did not press her amendment, and stressed the need to ensure that information made available is in a format that parents can use, and can be broken down in a way that enables them to evaluate whether their child's school is meeting needs.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, c21

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, c22

**c. Information on SEN laid before Parliament**

Maria Miller moved an amendment to require the Secretary of State, each calendar year after the Bill is passed, to lay before Parliament a report on SEN information and to ensure that following publication a debate is held on Government policy on SEN.

The Minister was sympathetic to the idea of debating SEN at any time in the House but was not convinced that making provision for a set-piece annual debate would be the best way to retain a spotlight on SEN:

I do not think that it is appropriate in the Bill to commit to a set-piece annual debate that may or may not be held when it is appropriate or necessary. I know that the hon. Member for Basingstoke feels strongly about the issue, but my sense is that we could make better progress if we worked together across the House to ensure that we keep special educational needs on the agenda and keep a spotlight on the issue throughout the parliamentary year, rather than relegating it to a particular annual slot.<sup>18</sup>

Annette Brooke asked if the Minister would consider publishing an annual report, and said that it could possibly be dealt with through the select committee. Responding, the Minister said that he would consider whether her suggestion was an appropriate way forward, and perhaps return to the matter during the later stages of the Bill.<sup>19</sup>

Mrs Hodgson said that while she supported any attempt to ensure that SEN issues are debated in Parliament, she did not believe it would be right to use the Bill to force debates on the floor of the House. She noted the various ways in which Members may raise issues, rather than being limited to an annual debate. She wanted Members on both sides of the House to work together to secure plenty of opportunity to debate SEN. Mrs Miller said that she did not want to jeopardise the Bill and withdrew her amendment, and hoped that Mrs Hodgson would reflect further on the debate.

Clause 1 and 2 were ordered to stand part of the Bill.

**d. New Clause 1: Information on School Provision**

Annette Brooke moved a new clause to amend section 332A of the *Education Act 1996* to ensure that information would be published annually on all types of school provision available in any LEA area so that parents have more information. Section 332A of the 1996 Act places a duty on local authorities to make arrangements to provide advice and information on SEN matters to the parents of children with SEN in their areas. These arrangements are known as parent partnership services. Much of the debate focused on the independence of parent partnership services.

The Minister pointed to an existing duty on local authorities to provide information on their arrangements for SEN, including information on planning and reviewing SEN provision in their area. He also noted in relation to parent partnership services that the

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, c25

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, c26



department had issued exemplary guidance setting out minimum good practice and best practice for the provision of information. The Minister also referred to new duties on local authorities under the *Childcare Act 2006* to provide information, advice and assistance to parents or prospective parents of children and young people up to the age of 20.

Mrs Hodgson appreciated the underlying aim of the new clause but did not think it was consistent with the Bill's objectives. She went on to comment on various issues raised in the debate. Commenting on Mrs Miller's earlier amendment - about the need for transparency and for information to help parents find the right school for their child – Mrs Hodgson said that she would have discussions with the Minister before Report Stage to ensure that if provision cannot be included in the Bill some assurances on guidelines could be given. Mrs Hodgson set out her concerns about the proposed new clause and asked Annette Brooke to withdraw it:

My main concern about the new clause is that it would require local authorities to publish annually all the information that their parent partnership services provide to parents. I do not feel that that would represent value for money or achieve any significant outcome for the support available to children with SEN. It is also important to consider whether any value would be added to overall SEN provision when obligations are already in place on local authorities to publish information about such arrangements. Minimum standards are already in place for parent partnership services and guidance is published by the Government. Of course we should try to avoid minimum targets and encourage targets to be set at a level that delivers maximum support for parents and pupils alike. All those things considered, I ask the hon. Member for Mid-Dorset and North Poole to withdraw the motion.<sup>20</sup>

Annette Brooke withdrew her motion and new clause after saying that she would return to the issue on Report as she remained concerned about whether advice provided by parent partnership services was independent. She also emphasised that the other purpose of the new clause was to give parents an idea of available provision in another local authority area.<sup>21</sup>

The Bill was reported without amendment.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, c31

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, c32

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, c34

## **IV Appendix 1 – Members of the Public Bill Committee**

**Chairman:** Mr. Peter Atkinson

**Members:**

Bercow, John (Buckingham) (Con)

Blackman-Woods, Dr. Roberta (City of Durham) (Lab)

Brennan, Kevin (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families)

Brooke, Annette (Mid-Dorset and North Poole) (LD)

Brown, Lyn (West Ham) (Lab)

Fraser, Christopher (South-West Norfolk) (Con)

Harper, Mr. Mark (Forest of Dean) (Con)

Hodgson, Mrs. Sharon (Gateshead, East and Washington, West) (Lab)

Hopkins, Kelvin (Luton, North) (Lab)

Keeley, Barbara (Worsley) (Lab)

Liddell-Grainger, Mr. Ian (Bridgwater) (Con)

Miller, Mrs. Maria (Basingstoke) (Con)

Moon, Mrs. Madeleine (Bridgend) (Lab)

Snelgrove, Anne (South Swindon) (Lab)

Waltho, Lynda (Stourbridge) (Lab)

Williams, Mark (Ceredigion) (LD)

**Committee Clerk:** Hannah Weston