

Editorial

Due to unforeseen circumstances the publication of this edition of *REACH* has been delayed and I wish to extend my apologies to all recipients of the Journal for this.

Earlier this year, the Minister for Education and Skills announced the establishment of the Inclusion Support Service within the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). This service will incorporate the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for Children and Young People who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing; Blind/Visually Impaired (VTSVHI) – services previously co-ordinated by the Department of Education and Skills.

There has been much discussion over the past year on the proposed new model in allocating additional support for children with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools. The new model proposes to allocate additional teacher support on the basis of individual need and other factors rather than diagnosis. The Minister has now decided to leave the current General Allocation Model (GAM) in place for the school year 2015-16 as it has not been possible to address all of the concerns in relation to the proposed new model. In the absence of the finer detail on the proposed new model, it remains to be seen if the new model will result in a better and more equitable system of support than that of the current GAM. In any case, the new model as it is currently planned will necessitate guidance and training for school staff to support them in identifying and prioritising those children in need of additional support.

Recently, as an interim measure, the Minister also announced the allocation of additional resource teacher hours to schools to support those children with Down syndrome who are not already receiving support from the annual school allocation. Under this interim measure schools will receive 2.5 resource teaching hours for children who qualify for such support. While this measure is to be welcomed, there are still other children in mainstream schools with similar complex needs who require additional teaching support.

The provision of special needs assistant (SNA) support to students with SEN is discussed in this issue of *REACH*. The implications of the recently issued *Circular 0030/2014* in relation to SNA support to meet the ‘care needs’ of students are discussed by Kerins and McDonagh. Concern is expressed for the likely reduction of support at post-primary level if SNA support is only to be provided to students with chronic care needs. They also highlight the need for training for SNAs in regard to the management of behavioural issues.

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