

[Sign in](#) · [Register](#)

Go to: [Guardian Unlimited home](#)



[Read today's paper](#) · [Jobs](#)

Search:

Guardian Unlimited  Web

**EducationGuardian.co.uk** **Schools special reports**  
**Home** **Higher** **Schools news** **Comment** **Special reports** **Education weekly** **Jobs** **Blog**  
[Links](#) [Interactive guides](#) [FE news](#) [Learn.co.uk](#) [Tefl news](#) [Help](#) [Talk](#)



# Help for special needs children 'matter of class, race and gender'

**Polly Curtis, education editor**  
**Friday December 14, 2007**  
[The Guardian](#)

Search Education

A child's chances of receiving extra help for a special educational need is dictated by geography, class, race and gender, rather than the nature of the learning difficulty, according to research.



Middle class children receive quicker and better support and powerful lobby groups representing particular disorders, such as dyslexia and autism, dominate funding. The system of "statementing" children and allocating resources allows for wide variations in the help children are given across the country.



Last night, opposition MPs demanded an overhaul of services in light of the research and teachers said that new figures on prevalence of special educational need (SEN) demonstrated the pressures they are under in the classroom.



The research, by Harry Daniels and Jill Porter of the University of Bath, will feed into Cambridge University's review of primary education, the biggest independent examination of the sector in 40 years.

"There is a pervasive gender bias, with not only higher incidence amongst boys than girls, but earlier recognition of boys' difficulties. Children from certain ethnic minority groups are more likely to be identified as having social emotional behavioural disorders than others," the report says. "Children with dyslexia and autism have powerful lobby groups and are over-represented within the system...children from more affluent backgrounds receive more help and for less significant levels of difficulty, than those from poorer homes."

Chris Keates, the general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, said: "It's time for the hit and miss approach to SEN to be abandoned. Youngsters' access to support should not be dependent on postcode. A national framework for special educational needs,

with guaranteed minimum standards of provision and support, is long overdue."

David Laws, the Liberal Democrat children's spokesman, said: "A fundamental overhaul of special needs provision is urgently needed."

A spokesman for the Department for Children, Schools and Families said: "It is essential that we focus on improving outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities if we are to achieve our goals for a world-class system. The children's plan underlined our commitment, with over £100m earmarked for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

"We will also be carrying out a review of special educational needs and disability in the context of personalised learning. It would be against the law for the school to discriminate against them because of behaviour related to their disability."

#### Related articles

30.07.2007: [Anthea Lipsett on the Tories' special educational needs reforms](#)

30.07.2007: [Tories unveil plans to end special needs inclusion](#)

26.06.2007: [Fall in schoolchildren with special needs](#)

15.05.2007: [Dyslexia support initiative launched](#)

06.02.2007: [Councils watchdog challenges SEN spending](#)

29.01.2007: [Report reveals ad hoc spending on special needs](#)

12.10.2006: [Government vows to improve special needs teacher training](#)

13.07.2006: [Teachers urge rethink on inclusion policy](#)

13.07.2006: [Ofsted warns on support for special needs children](#)

#### The issue explained

30.07.2007: [Q&A: Special educational needs](#)

#### Comment

30.07.2007: [Anthea Lipsett on the Tories' special educational needs reforms](#)

30.01.2007: [Estelle Morris: Why we need a new Warnock](#)

04.07.2006: [Virginia Bovell: Time to spell out the line on special needs](#)

#### Advertiser links

##### [Looking for Fixed Rate Remortgages?](#)

Free enquiry. Click here to complete an easy no-obligation...  
[DefaultRemortgages.co.uk](#)

##### [Do you want to Learn How to Paint?](#)

The London Art College specialises in providing tuition by...  
[londonartcollege.co.uk](#)

##### [Life Coach Training Courses](#)

Free life coach training courses run throughout the UK every...  
[the-coaching-academy.com](#)