

# DCSF: Draft Regulations for the Training of Newly Appointed Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in England

## The Response of the General Teaching Council for England (GTC)

1. The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) is the independent professional body for teaching. The Council acts in the public interest to contribute to raising standards of teaching and learning. Its main duties are to regulate the teaching profession and to advise the Secretary of State on a range of issues that concern teaching and learning.
2. The GTC is pleased to respond to the DCSF's draft regulations for the training of newly appointed SENCOs in England. In response to the consultation, the GTC offers the comments outlined below.
3. The GTC would like to see a range of training routes provided and accredited, in order to support a diverse group of individuals with a diverse range of needs, to gain a recognised qualification. The time allowed for newly appointed SENCOs to complete this requirement allows a necessary degree of flexibility for schools. However, given that new SENCOs will have three years within which to gain the qualification, it is important that from appointment they are adequately supported to fulfil the role and meet the needs of children with special educational needs.
4. The requirements will not apply to lead SENCOs who have been in post for over a year, including those who are returning after a career break. While this group may already have the skills and expertise required of a SENCO, it is critical that they have access to training and expertise, and that their skills and knowledge are refreshed and where needed updated.
5. The regulations come into force in September 2009 and the GTC would question whether adequate provision for training courses is being made, given that the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) will only begin to offer invitations to tender to potential training providers from September 2009. We would further suggest that the TDA work closely with providers to ensure that they have the capacity and expertise needed to deliver suitably flexible, high quality training.
6. The GTC welcomes the commitment to cover course fees and supply cover for new SENCOs.
7. The GTC responded to the TDA's earlier consultation on the draft specification for courses for SENCOs, in which it raised the following points which are of relevance to this consultation.
8. Whilst training and development for SENCOs is essential, there still needs to be a focus on ensuring that all teachers have access to and participate in appropriate, timely and sustainable SEN focused professional learning and development. As raised

by Ofsted<sup>1</sup>, the content and quality of experiences gained during initial teaching training are also critical, if all teachers, including those newly qualified, are to develop the skills and expertise needed so that all children and young people with SEN receive high quality teaching and learning.

9. It is important that as part of any training, potential SENCOs acquire the skills needed in order to develop the skills and expertise of other members of staff, and the ability to lead professional learning in school.
10. Given that the SENCO will need to lead and coordinate SEN provision in school, any training for SENCOs, needs to develop their skills and abilities to work with other professionals.
11. The training programmes for SENCOs should have a basis in practice, but there should also be a strong focus on current and emerging evidence including published literature and research on disability and SEN.
12. The GTC strongly supports the need for effective continuing professional development (CPD) for both teachers and SENCOs, and emphasises that this should be planned with reference to successive systematic reviews of research<sup>2</sup> which describe the characteristics of effective approaches to CPD as:
  - having a clear focus on pupil learning
  - involving teachers in identifying their needs
  - using coaching and mentoring
  - including observation, feedback and collaborative working
  - providing opportunities for practice, research and reflective practice and;
  - modelling preferred practice (e.g. active learning), both in classrooms and in adult learning situations.

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<sup>1</sup>How well new teachers are prepared to teach pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Ofsted, 2008  
<sup>2</sup> EPPI Systematic reviews 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the effectiveness of CPD and Bolam, R. and Weindling, R. (2006)  
GTC CPD research synthesis project