

An Overview of CPD Provision for Teachers in the area of Inclusion and Special Educational Needs

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1.0 Introduction

This brief report provides an overview of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for Irish teachers in the area of inclusion and Special Educational Needs (SEN). It has been drafted to accompany the recently compiled database, commissioned by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which contains information on provision available to teachers in Ireland to develop their professional competence in relation to inclusion and SEN. The database is located on the NCSE website and lists information on just over 200 options available to teachers. The first section of this report provides a note on the context for the project and the research undertaken to develop the database. The second section presents an overview of CPD courses, as listed in the database. The final section reflects on some of the issues in relation to current opportunities in inclusion and SEN focused CPD provision for teachers.

1.1 Rationale and Context for the Project

The rationale for the database was informed by data on SEN in Irish education and by international research into the role of teachers and teaching quality in ensuring positive educational outcomes. Data from the Growing Up in Ireland study indicates that one in four Irish school children have a learning or special educational need (Banks and McCoy 2011). Mainstream schools now include students with increasingly diverse needs and all teachers are involved in the education of students with a wide range of learning and special educational needs. International research has highlighted the central role of teachers and teaching quality in raising achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs. In 2005, an OECD review of teaching and teacher education across 25 countries suggested that raising teacher quality and standards was the policy direction most likely to lead to substantial gains in school performance (OECD, 2005: 23). Similarly, a 2006 UK OFSTED report indicated that the key factor contributing to students' progress (including students with complex needs) was access to experienced and qualified specialist teachers. More recently, the World Health Organisation (WHO) noted that appropriate training of mainstream teachers was crucial for them to be confident and competent in teaching students with diverse educational needs (WHO, 2011). However, evidence from NCSE-commissioned research as well as international studies suggests that teachers feel they are not adequately prepared or skilled to support students with special educational needs. (Ware et al. 2011; Kinsella et al. 2014; Forlin 2010; Tangen 2005).

It was against this backdrop that the NCSE commissioned the database project with the following two key aims:

- To scope out the range of CPD provision with a focus on inclusion and /or special education currently available to teachers in the Republic of Ireland, including that provided outside the state which teachers can be supported by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to avail of; and
- To collate and document detailed information about the nature of this provision and its key features, so as to provide an information resource and to highlight any issues arising from the scoping exercise.

While it is beyond the scope of this report to document all relevant aspects of the contemporary context for SEN-focused CPD, a number of significant developments that are directly relevant are worth noting. These are:

- The development of a national framework for CPD for teachers. In October 2014, the Teaching Council initiated a comprehensive consultation process to develop this framework, called Cosán. The final framework document was adopted by the Teaching Council and launched on 15 March 2016. Cosán commits to recognising the importance of teachers having access to rich and varied learning opportunities and undertakes to facilitate teachers in identifying opportunities for quality learning.
- In the context of reform of the Junior Cycle Programme, a new qualification has been designed for students with particular special educational needs who currently can't access the Junior Certificate. This programme will be aligned to Level 2 of the NFQ. The new Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) and qualification are targeted at a very specific group of students who have general learning disabilities in the higher functioning moderate and low functioning mild categories. The Learning Programmes are built around Priority Learning Units (PLUs) that develop the basic, social and pre-vocational skills of the students involved. Since 2014, a programme of school based seminars and modules for individual teachers has been implemented nationally to support the delivery of these programmes.
- In February 2015, a new Inclusion Support Service was announced. This will be located within the NCSE and will assist schools in supporting children with SEN. The service will include: the Special Education Support Service (SESS), which develops and delivers a range of CPD initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with SEN in a variety of educational settings; the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) which provides support and expertise to partner post-primary schools on issues related to behaviour; and the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf / hard of hearing and for children who are blind / visually impaired which offers longitudinal support to children, their families and schools from the time of referral through to the end of post-primary education. These agencies had been managed by the DES and their relocation to the new Inclusion

Support Service expands the role of the NCSE in the provision of CPD. At the time of writing their transition to the NCSE has not yet been fully realised.

1.2 Identifying CPD Provision

The time frame for the research extended from late November 2015 to mid-May 2016. The work involved identifying and categorising all items of provision, checking and validating information with providing organisations, constructing the database and populating it with the relevant data. The methodology was comprised of the following elements:

- Initially, direct contact was made with a number of providers or funders of CPD provision in the area of SEN to identify their role and to develop an overview of their provision and ongoing developments therein. These providers and / or funders included the Teacher Education Section (TES) of the DES, the SESS, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), and, in relation to the new Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programmes., the Junior Cycle for Teachers Support Service (JCT Support Service).
- Internet searches were undertaken using key terms. However, these were largely ineffective in identifying courses or providers. Subsequently, organisations involved in CPD provision were identified and searches were undertaken of their websites. These searches extracted web-based details of courses provided and where possible prospectus and other relevant information were downloaded. The websites searched included those of the SESS, Middletown Centre for Autism, Education Centres, online colleges, Third Level Institutions, Teachers' Unions, teachers and principals support organisations, and organisations involved in delivering services to people with disabilities.
- Subsequently, each of the providers was sent an excel spreadsheet containing the information extracted from their website and asked to verify, amend and where necessary fill in gaps in the information. This received a very high level of response and all amendments were incorporated.
- Emails were also sent to a large range of organisations which did not have details of CPD provision on their websites, informing them of the project and requesting details of any relevant courses or other options they made available to teachers. These organisations included Principal Associations, Disability Organisations, and Colleges of Further Education. This received a very low level of response.
- Finally, based on all of the material collected, and as amended by providers, the database was constructed and populated.

The information generated by these web-searches was categorised into twenty-six key headings of which seven are searchable:

Table 1: Categories and searchable items in Database

Provider	Delivery Details
*Type of provider	Location
*Type of course	Start date
*Type of qualification	Attendance requirements
Qualification	*Disability Focus
Accreditation	Course Aims / Focus
Course Title	Course Content / Overview
*School type	*Assessment involved
Special School only	Assessment details
Eligibility	Number of places
Entry requirements	Cost
Duration	Additional information
*Method of delivery	Provider Website

**Searchable items*

1.3 The Parameters of the Information contained in the Database

It is important to note a number of parameters in relation to the content and focus of the information included in the database and discussed in this report:

- The information in the database pertains to courses for which information was made available by the providing organisations, either through websites or through direct contact, within the timeframe of the research. Courses delivered outside of that timeframe for which information was not available may be omitted from the database. There are also a large number of courses which are made available at various locations and times throughout the year. The database lists these courses and contains available information on them and notes where additional and current information may be found. The database was fully up to date as of mid-May 2016. However, as many providers update their CPD calendars on a regular and, in some cases, continual basis, the database cannot be fully up to date on an ongoing basis.
- The information contained within the database refers exclusively to courses and similar forms of provision which teachers may participate in. Occasionally, organisations may host conferences, annually or less frequently, which have a CPD element within them. These are not included in the database. The database, therefore, is focused on just one of the recognised processes through which teachers may learn and increase their competence and skills. Other processes through which teachers learn have been identified by Cosán as Reading and Professional contributions; Practice and Collaboration; Mentoring /Coaching; Immersive Professional Activities; and Research.
- The database focuses exclusively on CPD. Thus it does not contain information on initial education of teachers. It does however include a listing for the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) which is aimed at newly qualified teachers.

- The database focuses specifically on CPD provision in the area of inclusion and SEN (including SEN provision embedded within a broader inclusion agenda). In doing so, it makes a clear distinction between special educational needs and differentiated learning needs. Only provision relating to the former is included in the database. The latter is the focus of a wide range of provision, (such as interventions to promote literacy amongst young children), but are not included in the database.
- The database includes only provision that is relevant to teachers. It includes all identified courses through which teachers can engage in CPD in the area of SEN including provision which is aimed at groups including but wider than teachers, such as other professionals, parents and SNAs. The database does not include information on SEN programmes which are targeted at groups other than teachers. It should be noted in particular that provision exclusively for SNAs is not included in the database.
- The database includes opportunities to avail of CPD made available by organisations outside the state only when there is financial support made available by the Irish state (via the Department of Education and Skills and / or SESS) to enable teachers participate in these.
- Finally, it is important to stress that this research focused solely on identifying and categorising courses offered to teachers. It did not attempt to assess the adequacy or quality of provision and the inclusion of any course in the database should not, in any way, be construed as endorsement.

2 Overview of CPD Provision for Teachers in the area of SEN

Based on the information contained in the database, the following section provides an overview of inclusion and SEN-focused CPD provision for teachers. The information is grouped here under three headings: providing organisations and types of courses; the focus and content of courses and associated qualifications; and, practical aspects of provision such as method of delivery, start date, location and costs.

2.1 Providing Organisations and Types of Courses

In total, 201 courses were identified by the research undertaken for this project which was carried out between late November 2015 and mid-May 2016. Courses which were not noted on websites, prospectus or by direct contact with providers during those months are not included in this figure. Thus, courses which had taken place prior to the start of the project may not be included here (unless they are repeat courses which are offered throughout the year or the provider forwarded information to the researcher). Summer courses which had not been finalised prior to the end of the research

are also excluded here. These include the programme of summer courses run by Drumcondra Education Centre on behalf of the TES. On average, approximately 50 courses of relevance to SEN are available via the TES summer programme. While details of the individual courses within this programme are not included in the database, it does include a single entry for the overall programme and notes where additional information is available. In view of this and other omissions, a conservative estimate of the actual number of SEN focused CPD courses available in any one year is likely to be greater than the 201 noted here.

Providing Organisations

It must be noted at the outset that a considerable amount of CPD provision in the area of SEN is funded by, and delivered within the remit of the DES and more specifically within the TES. TES funds CPD provision for teachers in mainstream schools and mainstream classrooms¹ and those in special schools, special classes or with specific roles vis-a-vis SEN, such as resource teachers, learning support teachers and visiting teachers. Two of the mechanisms through which it currently provides CPD in the area of SEN are the SESS (which as noted is being relocated to the NCSE), and the Special Education Initiative, a programme of graduate courses implemented through seven universities. The DES also funds the Education Centres which act as both providers in their own right and as venues for other providers at local level. In addition, the TES funds the Programme of Summer Courses administered on behalf of the Department by Drumcondra Education Centre, the Junior Cycle L2LPs, and the NIPT.

For ease of use, however, the basis for categorising providing organisations within the database is the type of organisation delivering, rather than funding, the courses. Thus, SESS provision is categorised as State Supported Specialist Provider while the Special Education Initiative is listed under Third Level Institutions. However, the providers of TES Summer Courses, the JC L2LPs and the NIPT are categorised as DES Providers.

Noting the above, the categories of Providing Organisations are as follows:

- Providers that operate within the remit of the DES. As noted, these are the NIPT, the JCT Support Service and the TES Summer Programme.
- State-supported specialist providers. These are the SESS and Middletown Centre for Autism.
- Education Centres: This category refers to Education Centres which provide their own CPD courses in the area of SEN. (Education Centres also provide venues for courses provided by third party organisations including SESS and Middletown Centre for Autism. These courses are listed under the relevant provider).
- Third level institutions. This category includes all colleges of the NUI, as well as TCD, Church of Ireland College of Education, DCU School of Special Education Drumcondra, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, and St Angela's College Sligo. A number of UK based

¹ Provision for CPD for teachers in mainstream schools is largely the responsibility of PDST. While this provision is developed in consultation with the Special Education Support Service (see below) and aims to cater for differentiated learning needs, it is different from SEN and as noted above is not included in this database.

universities which provide courses for which Irish teachers may be funded by the SESS are also included here.

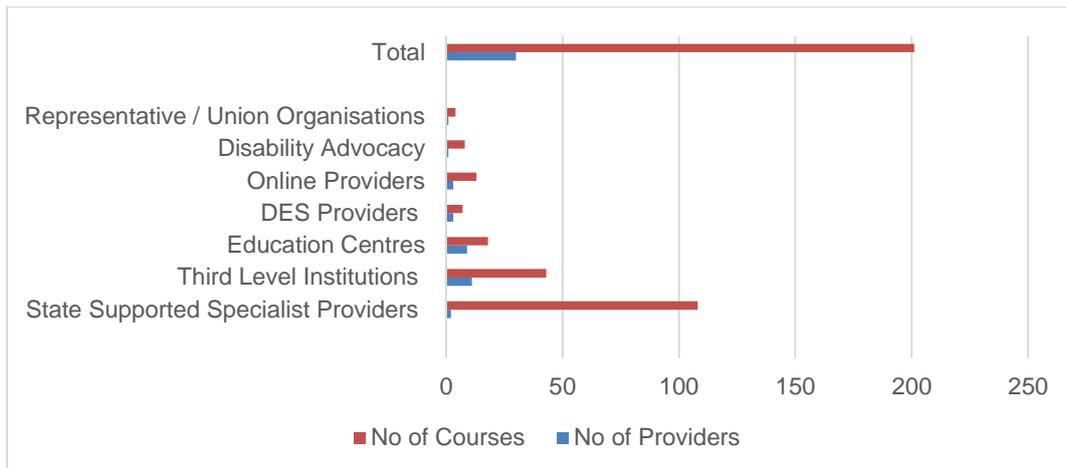
- Online providers. Three organisations which offer online course in SEN to teachers are included here. These are Hibernia, CPD College and Portobello College.
- Representative and / or union organisations for teachers and principals. Just one organisation is included here. This is the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
- Disability advocacy and service providers. Just one of these is included in the database, this is the Institute of Child Education and Psychology Europe (ICEPE).

The single largest category of provider is Third Level Institutions, of which 11 (including two UK based Universities) are currently involved in providing SEN focused CPD courses for teachers. Between them, these Third Level Institutions offer 43 courses. This figure includes programmes offered under the Special Education Initiative of the DES. It also includes stand-alone modules offered by St Angela's College Sligo. The largest number of courses are provided by the two State Supported Specialist organisations – the SESS and Middletown Centre for Autism (108 courses between them). Thus, these two categories of provider (Third Level Institutions and Specialist Providers) are delivering just over three quarters of provision currently included on the database. Were the estimated 50 TES Summer Courses included here, the overall number of courses would increase to approximately 250 with 80% delivered by Third Level Institutions, State Supported Specialist Providers and the TES Summer Programme.

Table 2: Type of provider by number of courses

Type of provider	No of providers	No of courses
Third Level Institutes	11	43
State supported specialist providers	2	108
DES Providers	3	7
Education Centres	9	18
Rep / union orgs	1	4
Online providers	3	13
Advocacy / service providers	1	8
Total	30	201

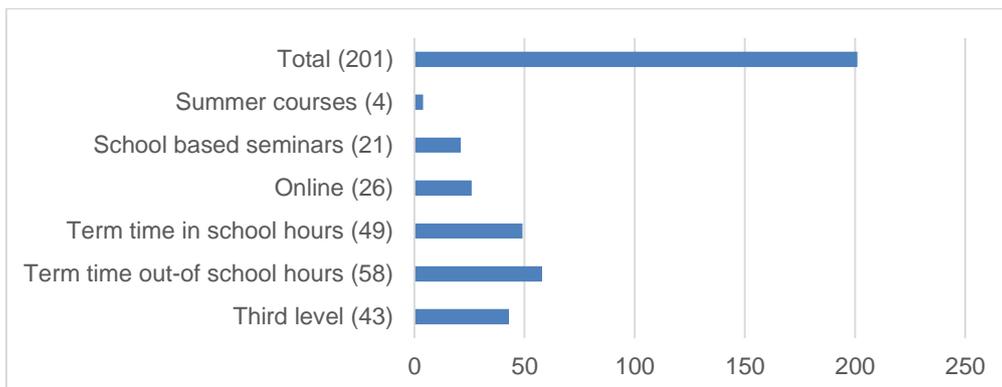
Figure 1: Type of Provider by Number of Courses



Type of courses

There is a very wide range of types of courses available to teachers seeking to develop their skills and knowledge in relation to SEN. Courses range from structured post-graduate degree programmes extending over two or more academic years to two-hour seminars delivered during or after school hours. The course classification system used in the database contains six discrete categories. These are: Third Level Courses; Term-time short courses within school hours and out of school hours, online courses; school based seminars and summer courses. The predominant forms of provision are term-time out of school hours courses (58), term time in-school hour courses (49) and Third Level Courses (43), The TES summer programme is counted as one course in the table below. There are three courses outside this programme, giving a total of four for this type of course. The inclusion of individual courses within the TES programme would significantly increase the number of summer courses.

Figure 2: Type of Courses Available



In terms of the number of discrete courses, the most common type of provision available to teachers are term-time short courses including those offered during school hours and those which take place

outside of school hours (accounting for 107 courses in total). Almost half of the courses contained in the database fall into these two categories. These courses typically range from seminars lasting two hours to courses of five or more days (often spread over several weeks). The main providers of term time short courses are the SESS, Middletown Centre for Autism and the Education Centres.

Third Level Courses are predominantly comprised of post-graduate Certificate, Diploma or Degree Courses. For the most part, these are delivered through blended learning involving online and face to face tuition. Those courses which are not delivered online usually require block release from school for certain periods. In general, these courses are of one to two year's duration, depending on the qualification involved, although some (particularly the online courses) are more flexible in terms of time frame. Also included in the category of Third Level Courses, are shorter courses, mostly comprised of single modules. These may be participated in cumulatively and can be used to accumulate credits under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) towards qualifications.

Summer courses are those run during the school summer holidays and usually range from 2 or 3 days to up to 8 days. The TES Summer Course Programme is the main framework through which this provision is made available by the DES and the vast bulk of summer courses are delivered through this programme. Just three summer courses which are delivered outside this framework were identified.

School based seminars are made available to schools, frequently at the request of the school, and can be availed of by some or all school staff. Currently, there are two main providers of school based seminars. These are the SESS and in the case of the Junior Cycle L2LPs, the JCT Support Service. SESS makes this type of provision available both pro-actively and reactively: schools may select an option from the SESS website, or they may request a specific input from the SESS. School based seminars tend to be for two or three hours' duration. Training for teachers on the new JC L2LPs is currently provided by the JCT Support Service via school based seminars throughout the country. These take place over several days and were initially offered to Special Schools and subsequently provided to schools within the ETB and community sector who specifically requested L2LP training.

Online courses (other than Third Level online courses) are made available by a number of organisations. In some instances, online courses can be availed of at any time by a teacher wishing to do so, although there may be a time limit set for completion. In other instances, they are offered within a specific timeframe and must be started and completed within this. With the exception of the SESS online provision, these types of courses tend to have a fee attached.

2.2 Focus and Content

Some of the substantive aspects of CPD provision are difficult to summarise. While disability focus has been categorised into a number of discrete groupings, the aims and content of courses are both very specific and very detailed and cannot really be presented in summary form.

Disability focus

Information on disability focus is taken verbatim from providers' own descriptions of the courses, and there may be some variation across providers in how much detail they provide or the precise terms used in specifying the disability focus of their courses. The single most predominant type of disability identified here is ASD which, with 81 courses, accounts for forty per cent of provision. The second most frequent focus is what is termed here as General SEN indicating the courses are of broad-based relevance. This accounts for exactly one quarter of provision or 50 courses. Apart from these two categories, other areas of disability feature to a far lesser extent. In some Third Level Courses, students may choose from a number of elective modules which provide a choice with regard to different disability focus. For example, the Special Diploma in Special and Inclusive Education offered by the DCU Institute of Education requires students to select one module from a range of options which include ASD, dyslexia and General Learning Disabilities. Elective modules are noted separately in the table below which looks at disability focus by type of course.

The prevalence of ASD and general SEN is apparent across all types of courses, with ASD the predominant focus of term time provision (including both in-school and out of school hours). General SEN is predominant amongst third level courses and school based seminars.

Table 3: Disability Focus by Type of Course

	Third level	Term time school hours	Term time Out of School Hours	Online	School based seminars	Summer courses	Total
ASD	5	29	39	5	2	1	81
General SEN	13	9	9	5	12	2	50
Dyslexia / Dyspraxia	1	1	4	4	2	0	12
General, Severe & Profound Learning Disabilities	3	3	4	1	2	0	13
Speech, Language and Communication	1	2	1	3	1	0	8
Deaf & HOH	3	3	0	2	0	0	8
Visual Impairment	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
Other disabilities	3	1	0	4	2	0	10
See course content	11	0	0	1	0	0	12
Research or related	2	0	0		0	1	3
Total	43	49	58	26	21	4	201

Aims and content of courses

The aims and content of courses are taken directly from providers' websites or other documentation. In general, detailed information is provided on both the aims and content of provision. A small number of providers offer less detailed information on these issues, and in some instances, none at all. For the most part however, the information provided appears adequate to enable a potential participant to make an informed choice.

Assessment, qualification and accreditation

Most CPD courses are not formally assessed: just 64 of the courses listed in the database are subject to assessment. These include most of the Third Level courses which are subject to a range of assessment methods, including supervision, examination and dissertation.

The relatively low proportion of courses which are assessed is reflected also in the data for qualifications. Just over forty of the listed courses have qualifications attached. Again, these are predominantly the Third Level courses where qualifications include graduate certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Accreditation follows a more varied pattern with 114 courses providing some form of accreditation. Apart from Third Level accreditation, this frequently involves in-house accreditation. Where accreditation is not provided, certificates of completion may be awarded.

2.3 Practical Aspects of Courses

The paragraphs below look at some practical aspects of provision including the entry requirements for courses, the method of delivery and start dates, duration and location.

School Level, Eligibility and Entry Requirements

Twenty entries do not contain information on school level. Of the remainder (181), 116 courses can be availed of by teachers at both primary and post-primary level, 35 by primary teachers only and 28 by post primary teachers only. Just 2 courses indicated they are focused solely on teachers in special schools. Overall, 151 courses are available to primary school teachers and 146 to post-primary teachers

Over and above school level, eligibility varies across courses and this usually reflects the course content. Some courses are aimed at teachers in specific circumstances (for example those teaching students with a disability or teaching in special classes in mainstream schools) or at teachers in specific roles (learning support, resource teachers or visiting teachers). Some eligibility requirements are related to employment status: for example SESS provision which takes place during school hours requires that the teacher can be substituted, in other words that they are in full-time employment. In some cases, eligibility is open to categories other than (but including) teachers, including other education professionals, SNAs, or what is sometimes termed by providers as 'all those interested'. A very small number of courses explicitly target parents along with teachers. A main provider of these is Middletown Centre for Autism.

Few providers stipulate entry requirements for their courses. The main exceptions here are Third Level Courses where prior achievement of a basic standard is usually required. Some post-graduate diploma courses require that the associated Certificate course has been completed and similarly,

some Masters courses require that a related post-graduate diploma course has been successfully undertaken.

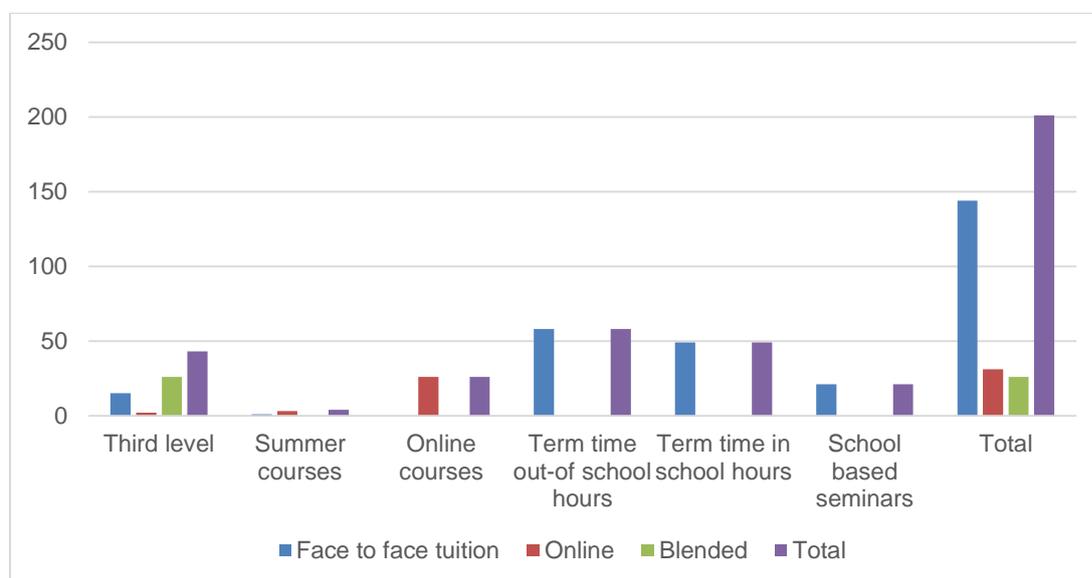
Method of delivery is important as it may impact on the accessibility of a course. The three sub-categories here are online delivery, face to face tuition, and blended learning usually involving a combination of the previous two methods. Face to face tuition is the most prevalent type of delivery, with 144 courses delivered in this way. Thirty-one courses are delivered online, while 26 are described as blended, incorporating a combination of online and face to face tuition. Not surprisingly, there is significant variation in the way different types of courses are delivered. Term time short courses, both in school hours and out of school hours, are exclusively delivered through face to face tuition whereas Third Level courses are predominantly blended.

Table 4: Method of Delivery by Type of Course

	Face to face tuition	Online	Blended	Total
Third Level	15	2	26	43
Term time in-school hours	49	0	0	49
Term time out of school hours	58	0	0	58
School based seminar	21	0	0	21
Summer course	1	3	0	4
Online	0	26	0	26
Total	144	31	26	201

*Two courses do not provide information on method of delivery

Figure 3: Method of Delivery by Type of Course



Most Third Level Institutions also provide additional detail on the delivery of their courses, including block release requirements, induction days, placement requirements etc.

Location and start dates

The location of CPD courses varies somewhat. In the case of Third Level courses, the face to face element of tuition usually takes place on the college campus with supervision taking place in the students' own school or in a placement setting. Other face to face courses (of which the vast majority are short-term time courses) are delivered in local venues throughout the country. This is facilitated by the Education Centres which offer courses themselves and which also provide venues for third parties, notably SESS and Middletown Centre for Autism. Because these providers continually update their calendar of provision, it is not possible to specify the location of their courses until they are notified on the organisations' own websites.

This latter point applies also to the start date of courses. Other than Third Level courses (which tend to follow the academic year by starting in September, although some have a second start date in January) most other courses have varied dates throughout the year as they are implemented in different venues.

Cost

A very significant amount of CPD provision is made available without cost to the participants, and in some instances participation costs (travel, subsistence etc.) may also be covered. In total, 147 of the courses listed in the database are provided free of charge. Third Level courses (with the exception of those included in the DES Special Education Initiative) tend to have fees attached, as do most online courses.

3. Concluding comments

From the research undertaken for this project, it is clear that a large number of courses are available to teachers wishing to increase their skills in the area of inclusion and SEN. While 201 courses are included in the database, the actual number is likely to be larger than that. A small number of provider types and course types predominate provision: thus, Third Level Institutions and third level courses account for a large amount of provision; as does state supported specialist providers and short term-time courses. There is also a predominance of courses focused on ASD, general SEN and General Learning Disabilities across all course types. Most of the CPD provision for teachers in the area of SEN seems to be located within a specific SEN framework, rather than within a broader inclusion framework. The main exceptions to this are Third Level programmes and the Inclusion focused module of the NIPT

In terms of location and dates, it is clear that courses are implemented on a nationwide basis (facilitated by Education Centres) and with a rolling calendar. Eligibility criteria do not appear to be restrictive with the possible exception of substitute teachers not being able to avail of SESS provision. Most courses are not subject to assessment and do not provide a qualification. Additionally, most courses are provided free of charge to the participant.

Given the challenge of incorporating rolling provision, it has to be stressed that this database is not intended to act as a substitute for the websites of the providing organisations. Teachers wishing to know what is being made available by a specific provider, at a specific point in time, should refer directly to that provider's website. The benefit of the current database is that it enables teachers to develop a broad view of provision, over time, across a range of providers and disability focus, and across a range of course type and delivery methods. Thus, the database should act as a resource and first point of enquiry for those teachers wishing to develop an overview of provision and opportunities available to them and will help guide them on where to access more information.

It must also be noted that this project did not examine demand or participation in CPD provision, nor did it seek to address any issues in relation to the development and delivery of courses or any issues in relation to participation. Additionally, the impact of these courses on the skill, knowledge and work practices of teachers was outside the scope of the project. The following comments therefore relate solely to what can be gleaned from an analysis of current provision based on the information available and some reflections on this.

- From the research undertaken for this project, it appears to be the case that very many providers update and develop their provision on an ongoing basis. Many do so both proactively and reactively as they try to respond to changing needs and demands. The extent to which all providers base the development of their provision on identified demand and need is not clear from this research. Nor is the extent to which the totality of courses available maps onto current need clear from the current research. Given the predominance of some areas of disability across all types of courses identified here, the possibility of gaps in relation to certain types of disability cannot be fully discounted. In relation to the predominance of courses focused on ASD, we do know that the prevalence of this has grown significantly in Ireland with one in every 65 students diagnosed with autism².
- This project has focused on CPD for teachers and has not examined the issue of initial teacher education (ITE). Again, given the large number of courses and the ongoing development of these, a question arises as to the extent to which SEN-focused CPD provision complements SEN focused ITE, or the extent to which it is a response to gaps in ITE in this area.
- For teachers who are interested in developing a strategy of CPD in relation to a specific area of SEN, it appears that there are opportunities to avail of different types of courses with a similar focus, at different times, over any specific timeframe, thus cumulatively acquiring a greater level of skill and knowledge over time. Similarly, for teachers wishing to develop their skills and knowledge across a range of disability areas, or across different types of interventions, the range of options available suggests this is possible. A question arises

² NCSE (2016) Supporting students with Autism Spectrum disorder in schools. NCSE Policy Advice Paper No.5

regarding the availability of quality advice and guidance for teachers in selecting a course or in selecting a range of courses to provide them with the type and range of skills they feel they need, at any given point in time or to enhance their professional competence over their careers.

- Over and above actual provision, the issue of ease of access for teachers is important. Again, based on the information included in the database, it seems there are widespread opportunities here. The delivery of courses at various times (during school hours; in the evenings; at weekends; during holidays) should help to facilitate access. So too should the fact that much provision is available at the local level. The widespread availability of online courses should also facilitate access. In addition, the fact that a lot of courses do not have any costs attached should also be an advantage. The possibility that some teachers may have difficulty with access must be recognised however, particularly in rural areas where distances may be considerable for face-to-face courses.

- Throughout the web based research for this project, it became apparent that there are information deficits in relation to CPD provision. There is great variation in the quality and accessibility of the information provided to potential participants by different providers. Most websites do provide a great deal of detail in a very accessible manner, some however provide very little information. In some cases, too, information on specific courses is fragmented requiring considerable engagement with the website. In addition, many providers schedule their provision at varying times throughout the year, and update their websites accordingly. It also seems to be the case that search engines are not finding a lot of the courses actually available. As a result of these factors, teachers seeking information on available CPD opportunities must check a range of websites on an ongoing basis. While the NCSE database cannot substitute for the websites of providing organisations, it goes a long way to addressing these issues by providing a single source of information for teachers.

Appendix 1

Summary of Key Provision

➤ **Special Education Support Service (SESS)**

The SESS was established by the TES in 2003 to provide a comprehensive and co-ordinated response to the CPD needs of school personnel. The SESS develops and delivers a range of CPD initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with special educational needs in a variety of educational settings, including mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and special classes. SESS provision includes seminar type presentations for teachers usually during school hours and delivered from Education Centres or other local venues. Participating teachers are substituted during their attendance and must receive approval from their Boards of Management to attend. Other forms of provision by SESS include school-based seminars and online courses. All provision, which is free of charge, is listed on the SESS website which is constantly updated. In addition to its own provision, the SESS also provides financial support annually for a limited number of teachers to avail of distance learning from a number of UK based Universities and to participate in the Applied Behaviour Analysis course delivered by Trinity College Dublin. It also provides financial support for teachers to attend at courses delivered at the Middletown Centre for Autism.

➤ **Middletown Centre for Autism**

Middletown Centre for Autism is a North-South educational initiative which was established in 2007 with funding provided by the Department of Education Northern Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills, Ireland. The Centre, based in Middletown, Co Armagh, aims to support the promotion of excellence in the development and co-ordination of education services to children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Middletown Centre provides a wide range of courses, some of which are offered as stand-alone seminars, while others are delivered as components of a five or six-week Programme. All courses are open to teachers and some can also be availed of by other relevant professionals and by parents. Courses are free of charge and are delivered at various locations across the island of Ireland, and within in the Centre itself. Ongoing development of provision is a feature of Middletown Centre for Autism. It publishes its prospectus in autumn of each year and course details are also available on its website. Teachers may book places on the courses via the website.

➤ **DES Special Education Initiative**

The DES funds the Special Education Initiative which is delivered by seven Third Level institutions. The main form of provision here is a combined Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma course with a focus on SEN. The table below shows the Institutions involved in this and the specific programmes they offer within the Special Education Initiative.

Table A.1: Overview of DES Special Education Initiative

Institution	Courses
Church of Ireland College, Rathmines,	Combined Post –Graduate Diploma Programme
National University of Ireland Galway	Combined Post –Graduate Diploma Programme
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	Combined Post –Graduate Diploma Programme Introductory course for Resource Teachers (Primary)
St. Angela’s College, Sligo	Combined Post –Graduate Diploma Programme Post-Graduate Certificate/Diploma Programme of CPD in Special Educational Needs (ASD) for Teachers
School of Inclusive and Special Education, St. Patrick’s Campus, Drumcondra	Graduate Certificate in the Education of Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders Combined Post –Graduate Diploma Programme Induction courses for teachers of pupils with Severe & Profound General Learning Disabilities
University College Cork (UCC)	Combined Post –Graduate Diploma Programme
University College Dublin (UCD)	Combined Post –Graduate Diploma Programme

➤ **Other Graduate Programmes**

Third Level institutions also provide additional options for qualified teachers to pursue further study in relation to SEN. These include the DCU School of Inclusive and Special Education, St. Patrick’s Campus, Drumcondra which offers several options in Post-Graduate Certificate, Diploma and Degree Courses and St Angela’s College Sligo, which also offers a number of Post-Graduate Certificate, Diploma and Degree Courses³. A number of other Third Level options are funded by the SESS, both in Ireland and in the UK. These include a course in TCD focused on ABA and courses in Manchester and Birmingham focused on sensory impairment and which can be applied for by Visiting Teachers. Some colleges currently offer individual modules as stand-alone options. St Angela’s College Sligo offers fourteen modules as stand-alone courses most of which can be accessed online and which can be participated in cumulatively. NUI Galway is planning to introduce similar provision in the near

³ Universities also offer Masters and PhD degrees by research / dissertation, participants in which may opt to select SEN related topics as their focus. NUIG actively encourages its Masters students to do this.

future. The DCU School of Inclusive and Special Education also offers a short induction course for teachers of pupils with severe and profound general learning difficulties.

➤ **Education Centres**

Nine Education Centres are included in the database based on the fact that they deliver their own CPD provision in the area of SEN. These are located throughout the country and in general their courses are short, term-time, out of school hours ones. Courses are delivered via face to face tuition and are generally delivered free of charge. Education Centres update their calendars regularly, some on a monthly basis and some on a term basis. Teachers may book places online.

➤ **TES Summer Programme**

The TES funds a programme of short summer courses which are delivered on an annual basis during the school summer holidays and for the most part in the first fortnight of July. This scheme is administered on behalf of the TES by Drumcondra Education Centre. These courses are usually between 3 and 5 days' duration and are delivered primarily through face to face tuition although some are online. From an overall programme of approximately 200 courses, somewhere in the region of 50 courses are usually relevant to SEN and cover a variety of topics pertaining to both specific disabilities and general SEN and to specific interventions for students with SEN, for example in the area of IT⁴. These summer courses are, for the most part, devised and delivered by organisations with an ongoing role in CPD. Organisations apply on an annual basis to deliver their courses within the framework of the Summer Programme. Courses are advertised on the Drumcondra Education Website in May and teachers may book online.

➤ **Junior Cycle Level 2 Programme**

In the context of the roll out of the Junior Cycle Level 2 Programme, a series of courses has been developed and is being implemented throughout the country by the JCT Support Service. The implementation of courses commenced in 2014 and continues throughout the current year. The Level 2 Junior Cycle Training programme involves two non-consecutive days of seminars delivered on a whole school basis. A series of modules for individual teachers is also being developed.

➤ **National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)**

The National Induction Programme for Teachers is funded by the Department of Education and Skills, and is designed to meet the particular professional learning needs of newly qualified teachers. The programme, run in collaboration with ATECI (Association of Teacher Education Centres of Ireland),

⁴ *The TES Summer Programme is finalised in mid to late May of each year. Consequently, detail on individual courses are not included in the current database although the overall programme is noted.*

the DES and the Teaching Council, is facilitated by practicing teachers from local schools, in each of the 21 full-time Education Centres. All newly qualified teachers are required to participate in the Induction Programme in order to be fully registered with the Teaching Council. Newly qualified teachers may combine school-based professional learning activities with off-site workshops. The Induction Programme is comprised of 13 modules, of which one is devoted to inclusion. This module focuses specifically on the classroom environment and classroom planning to support inclusion with a particular emphasis on ensuring that pupils and students with special educational needs are included. This module is delivered throughout the country, most usually within local Education Centres.

➤ **Online providers**

In general, Colleges of Further Education do not provide CPD options for teachers in the area of SEN. Quite a few do have provision for SNAs, but this is outside the scope of the database. The Colleges of Further Education which do provide CPD SEN courses and which are included in the database are CPD College, Hibernia and Portobello Institute. All three of these colleges provide online courses in a number of SEN areas. Portobello College also have a postal option available on all their courses. Courses do not lead to a qualification but participants are awarded a Certificate. All courses have a fee attached.

➤ **Representative and union organisations**

Just one organisation in this category is listed in the database. These is the INTO. INTO Learning provides a number of CPD courses for primary teachers including in the area of SEN. Three summer courses, all online, are included in the database. The Irish Learning Support Association (ILSA) offers a number of courses in conjunction with Education Centres and these are listed under the relevant Education Centre.

➤ **Disability Advocacy / Service Providers**

A number of disability advocacy and service provider organisations provide seminar and workshop type courses which are relevant to the teaching of children and young people with SEN. However, the options provided by these organisations are generally infrequent and are scheduled on an ongoing basis.

Appendix 2:

List of Acronyms

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ATECI	Association of Teacher Education Centres Ireland
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DES	Department of Education and Science
DCU	Dublin City University
ECT	European Credit Transfer
ICEPE	Institute of Childhood Education and Psychology Europe
ILSA	Irish Learning Support Association
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PLU	Programme Learning Unit
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TES	Teacher Education Section
WHO	World Health Organisation