



The *Independent* Helpline for Special Educational Needs.
Tel. 020 8538 3731

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

**November 2003
– October 2004**

**All children with Special Educational Needs
shall have the opportunity to become
confident and effective learners**

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Helpline

In October 2002 we launched our telephone Helpline for parents and others seeking procedural help and advice on Special Educational Needs. This is the report on our second year of activities. It is shorter than last year's largely because there seems little point in repeating in detail the concerns expressed last year and still ignored. We give, however, the references to last year's report which may be obtained by contacting us or turning to www.hampton-online.co.uk

2. Comments

The needs and concerns raised in our 2002 – 2003 Report remain largely the same. There is little or no evidence that efforts have been made by local education authorities to address seriously these matters.

During the past year there has been an important increase in the number of calls to the Helpline from parents from other authorities. Some of these have turned into long term cases in which we have become actively involved.

The wider experience of much greater contact this year with parents/carers from other authorities has enabled us to identify a number of key issues. These are included in the body of this report. We hope that these will provide not only for discussion but urgent action

3. Calls Received: October 2003 – October 2004

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total Callers – | 151 |
| Callers in Richmond Borough | 87 |
| Callers from other Local Authorities | 64 |
| Total Calls leading to Long Term Cases* – | 56 |
| Cases in Richmond | 36 |
| Cases from other Local Authorities | 20 |
| Total Calls leading to Medium Term Cases^ - | 44 |
| Cases in Richmond | 21 |
| Cases from other Local Authorities | 23 |
| Cases outstanding from year 2002 – 2003 - | 5 |

*Lasting more than 3 months

^Lasting from 1 to 3 months

4. Main SEN Needs Reported in Richmond and Other Authorities

No major change from last year.

- Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (approx. 75% of total)
- Speech and Language Difficulties
- Moderate Learning Difficulties
- Severe Learning Difficulties
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (5 cases in Richmond)
- Dyspraxia
- Dyslexia
- Down’s Syndrome
- Visual Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Cerebral Palsy
- Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

Note. In most cases the child had more than one need – e.g. children with ASD demonstrated sensory, motor and behavioural difficulties and some also had ADHD.

5 School Age of Children — Long Term Cases

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----|---------|-----|-----------|-----|
| All Local Authorities | Pre- School | 10% | Primary | 75% | Secondary | 15% |
| Richmond | Pre- School | 7% | Primary | 77% | Secondary | 16% |

NOTE In Primary schools the concern was in many cases related to future secondary school placements and provision.

6. Range of Concerns

These have scarcely changed since last year and apply to all authorities named.

1. Poor communications inc. failure to reply to contacts and confused understanding about what is or has been happening.
2. Inadequate support from schools
3. Inadequate support from LEAs
4. Statutory Assessment Problems
5. Statementing problems
6. Delayed provision and discontinued provision
7. Inflexible Transport policy
8. Disability Discrimination and Exclusions
9. Secrecy of the SEN Panel.
10. Inadequate provision of therapies.
11. The use of delaying tactics and distorted information.



SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

1.0 About the Helpline

We offer a friendly, independent, confidential telephone helpline for parents and others looking for information and advice on Special Educational Needs. There are no fees required. All members of the Helpline and its back-up team are volunteers who have either spent much of their lives in education or related services or are parents who have themselves fought with success for their children's rights and have followed a period of training to help others. The help we offer includes

- Interpreting the SEN Code of Practice and other related documents
- Interpreting official letters
- Checking proposed and revised Statements of special educational needs
- Helping prepare letters of request, comment and complaint
- Finding independent professional advice – eg educational psychologists, lawyers etc.
- Giving guidance on the next available procedures which may be suitable
- Acting as a “friend” to accompany parents on visits to the offices of officials in the education and health services and to meetings in schools
- Advising on preparation of case statements for SENDIST (Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal)
- Writing case statements.
- Presenting cases at the Tribunal or acting as a helper to the parents.

The helpline is totally independent and tries to give support not only to parents but to school as well. Very often by supporting parents to fight for their children's rights we are indirectly supporting schools in getting the extra support they need to meet the needs of the children.

We can be called on **020 8979 8853** and one of our team will listen carefully and either provide an immediate answer to questions or, more likely, take a few details and ask the most suitable member of the team to call back. On those occasions when we are not available, a message and phone number can be left. The line is open 7 days per week. We do also communicate by e-mail but prefer all initial contacts to be by phone so that we can have a more friendly exchange of ideas.

Where cases are complicated we may suggest a meeting to talk things through. In such a case we may, with the permission of the caller, involve more than one team member or contact our advisory solicitor for clarification of a legal point.

We also run workshops on matters relating to SEN procedures – e.g. Statutory Assessment, Checking a Proposed Statement, Preparing for Tribunal, How to prepare for Annual Reviews.

We raise our funds through a range of social and other events and welcome donations. We are now in the process of applying for charitable status, and looking for a room to use as a “call in” centre in Twickenham to be open one afternoon per week. Money raised goes to meet telephone costs, legal and other professional advice, and office expenses and training for helpline team members.

2.0 General Background to 2003 – 2004.

We launched SOS!SEN in October 2002 at a meeting of VIPs in SEN, The Voice of Independent Parents in Special Educational Needs (www.vips-in-sen.co.uk). Over the past 2 years our publicity has focussed on the local media, a leaflet to schools, and the website of VIPs in SEN and directly on www.hampton-online.co.uk. The education grapevine has also brought us many calls as independent psychologists and therapists have suggested to parents that they call us for procedural advice on coping with bureaucratic difficulties. Most importantly the news of our existence has spread from parent to parent.

The appointment of a Parent Partnership Worker for Richmond has meant that the number of general inquiries has not increased significantly. The number of difficult and complex cases has, however, increased as parents have heard of the range of advocacy help we can give. For many parents who do not have the resources to engage a lawyer to advise them and act for them SOS!SEN has become very popular. We hold to the view that wherever possible parents need to seek the best possible help and that is usually specialist legal help. Nonetheless, we are building up a wealth of knowledge and experience and happy to share it. It is our view that in their attempts to help their children parents are at a great disadvantage because they do not have the time, the experience or the funds to challenge the various agencies involved. Many start off thinking that they will get the best of help from the agencies and take what they are given on trust only to find that the help is inadequate.

3.0 Number, Sources and Nature of Calls to the Helpline.

151 callers contacted us and the distribution of calls is set out in our introduction. A high proportion still came from Richmond but there were notable increases from Kingston and Surrey. We also took long term cases from Merton, Wandsworth, Hampshire, Berkshire, and Hammersmith and Fulham, with a smattering of cases from Bromley, Croydon, Lambeth, Kent, and West Sussex.

3.1 Special Educational Needs

A very wide range of special educational needs were covered by the callers and in addition to the more frequent ones, mentioned in full in our Summary, a small number of calls covered syndromes arising from chromosome disorders.

The implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 were also topics of concern and particularly in relation to exclusions from mainstream school and discrimination complaints against schools and LEAs.

We successfully completed two cases with the Local Government Ombudsman, obtaining compensation for the parents, and are now assisting at an early stage with two others.

3.2 Age Range of Children

Particularly remarkable remained the very high proportion of calls concerning children of Primary School age. There was particular concern as children came up to transition from infant to junior school or junior to secondary as to whether their children would get adequate support as they tackled an increasingly complex curriculum and whether the actual placement was or would be suitable.

Amongst secondary pupils it was of great concern to find the number of children at risk of exclusion or failing to achieve their potential in secondary school because of the lateness of intervention, inaccurate diagnoses at an earlier age, or placement in a school which did not have the expertise or funds to meet the children's needs. All too often secondary pupils find themselves at the age of 15/16 with exclusions, or reduced timetables, or performing well below their potential because their needs have not been recognized and met earlier in their school lives. For them there is little that can be done and particularly so when it is too late in the system for Statutory Assessment of need and subsequent provision to be made within the time they have left at school. There is a case sometimes for Negligence and this is an area in which we are beginning to become involved with recent school leavers. Parents/carers of secondary school pupils rarely meet at the school gate and this tends to mean that they lack the opportunities to discuss problems with each other and so have a supportive group.

3.3 Speech and Language Difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Specific Learning Difficulties.

These tended to dominate the number of calls to the Helpline during the year. ASD including Aspergers Syndrome partly because of its high media coverage and better diagnosis has undoubtedly been the need which has brought forward the highest number of long term cases, many ending at Tribunal. Insufficient support and staff training as well as late provision by way of an adequate Statement has left a number of children in serious difficulties. The most notable was an above average ability child permanently excluded from 2 schools in turn and then out of school for over a year. His needs are now being met in a very specialist school ordered by SENDIST at the cost of over £100,000 per year. Had the diagnosis and appropriate provision been made years earlier he might well have been able to stay successfully in mainstream school at a cost far lower to meet his needs.

For children with ADHD there was a marked increase in the concerns of parents that their children’s needs are not receiving the quality and level of support that they need to learn to manage their behavioural difficulties and so progress with their studies.

Many children with delays in reading and writing were found to have in addition to their Specific Learning Difficulties, problems of communication (sometimes linked to ASD) Attention Deficit and Dyspraxia. For many parents the complexities of their children’s needs are not recognized or recognized and acted upon too late. If the LEAs do not ensure that a full diagnosis is carried out how can parents know whether their children are getting the help they really need?

4.0 Concerns Reported By Callers.

The range of concerns was reported last year, expanded upon and found to be justified. They have changed very little this year. They are set out below but further explanations of these are not provided since they are as appropriate this year as last and, judging by parent comment and Tribunal appeal results, the LEAs have paid scant attention to those concerns. The results of Tribunal appeals for the borough of Richmond upon Thames are annexed to this document. For further information readers should refer to the Annual Reports of SENDIST published in November each year and available from the SENDIST Offices at Procession House, 55 Ludgate Hill, EC4M 3JW or www.sendist.gov.uk. A full account of the concerns expressed last year can be found in our report for last year.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 1 | Poor Communications with L.E.A. |
| 2 | Inadequate Support from the School |
| 3 | Inadequate Support from the L.E.A. |
| 4 | Statutory Assessment & Reassessment Problems |
| 5 | Statemnting Problems |
| 6 | Delayed or Discontinued Provision |
| 7 | Inflexibility of Transport Provision |
| 8 | Discrimination under the SEN & Disabilities Act 2001, & Disabilities Discrimination Act 1995 |
| 9 | Lack of confidence in the SEN Panel |
| 10 | Inadequate Provision of Therapies |
| 11 | Delaying tactics and distorted information |

Of the above Poor Communications with the LEA was a major concern with nearly all callers. Lost letters, confusion about who had dealt with what and when, delegation of work to people who were new to the job or being asked to carry out responsibilities for which they were not qualified, rudeness, early departure from the office, failure to call back – these were the main concerns in this category but there were also cases of rudeness, distortion of information, and “sweet talk” or down right lies.

Callers were very aware that schools had very limited funding for pupils at School Action and School Action Plus. Many were very appreciative of the efforts of the schools to help despite their lack of resources Some schools were perceived as being very supportive in trying to get Statutory Assessment where children needed

it whilst other schools were perceived as unwilling to admit that they could not cope or unwilling to admit that there was any problem. There were concerns that the Code of Practice was often ignored and that such requirements as reports to be sent out 14 days in advance of an Annual Review were ignored. Some callers complained that they felt heads and SENCOs seemed very much in awe of their LEAs and felt obliged to be witnesses on behalf of the authorities at Tribunal and obliged to follow the threshold guidance adopted and published by LEAs rather than respond to the Adequacy of Progress clauses in the Code of Practice. This often made for damaging relationships between parents/carers and the schools.

5.0 Emerging Issues

These have been gathered from our experience in working with parents/carers from a number of local authorities. We give below those issues which seem the most common.

5.1 Provision of Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy

The Shortage of Therapists from the NHS and the tendency to recommend only the level of therapy that they have the time, staff and facilities to provide rather than what the child really needs.

We saw virtually no statements of SEN for children over the age of 5 in mainstream school which provided for direct therapy from a qualified Speech and Language or Occupational Therapist. Instead there was vague reference along the lines of “A package of care” to include up to x visits per term from the therapist who will monitor progress and advise the learning support assistant on the strategies to be carried out.” Parents/carers think their child is going to get direct therapy only to find out that this is far from the case. They have no recourse since the Statement is so vague as to let the LEA off the hook for any judicial review. **Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy are educational needs** and if clearly specified in Part 3 of a Statement the LEA is legally obliged to provide them **even if they have to appoint private therapists where the NHS cannot or will not provide**. It is not difficult to see why therapy is set out in such a woolly fashion in most proposed statements.

Parents/carers beware!

5.2 Clarity of Provision in School

Parents are not clear about exactly what support their children are getting in school. They feel they are not kept informed.

This common complaint arises in relation to children on the SEN Register but not stated. No matter how well intentioned the school it has only a small SEN budget to work on and often has to provide on a fairly ad hoc basis. The problem is there however, even for a stated child, if the statement is vague and refers to “a high level of learning support” or “x hours of teacher support or Y hours of l.s.a. support or any combination of these individually or in pairs or in groups.” This easily allows for the school to arrange provision to suit its needs rather than the child’s and to use that child’s l.s.a. to support others. In many authorities this vague wording of a statement also effectively allows Statement money to be pooled and used on a class

and subject basis rather than one to one support for the child through the school. The consequences of this may not be in the interests of the individual child at all.

How often do we hear “I’m really not sure whether my child is getting the provision he’s supposed to have? Why can’t they give me a time-table of when he’s getting his provision and who’s giving it?”

Parents/carers beware! Fight for specific provision.

5.3 SEN funding.

The SEN budget for non-statemented children is inadequate to meet needs and to provide early intervention. Governing bodies are reminded of their responsibilities but do not get the funds they need to carry them out. At the same time more and more leas are trying to persuade parents that they would get better provision for their children without a statement of SEN.

Because funding for Statements is often based on a banding system or similar as devised by the LEA the amount of money going to the school does not cover the full number of support hours indicated in the Statement or the full salary of a suitably qualified member of staff. The result is that schools feel forced (illegally) to cut corners by appointing a member of staff for fewer hours than on the Statement.

5.4 Inter Agency and Intra Departmental Communications and Planning.

Joined up thinking between the LEA, Social Services and the NHS is rare. Serious failure to communicate important information between the agencies and officers involved.

Many parents/carers hope that the Children’s Act will help ensure that the various agencies will work together. For many parents it seems that each agency is anxious not to get involved in spending money on the child so that for example, core assessments from Social Services are resisted in order to avoid S.S. contributions to, say fees, at a residential special school or help to the family outside school hours.

The views of paediatric psychiatrists on suitable education are often dismissed by LEAs as irrelevant because psychiatrists are seen as “doctors and not educationalists”.

5.5 Care for the Carers.

Social Services and Schools provide insufficient help or support for parents/carers for children with SEN to get respite and other help.

Many parents/carers care for more than one child with SEN and many have children who exhibit very challenging behaviour. They are often at breaking point and the families suffer Schools could do more to advise parents on support available and support their requests for help and Social Services could be more proactive, provide more help and ensure stronger direct links with the school. This would benefit all concerned.

5.6 The Quality of Diagnosis of Need.

Poor Quality Diagnosis of Need leading to Inadequate Provision.

Failure by LEAs to Ensure that children receive a full Statutory Assessment by automatically requesting assessments from Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists and the apparent restrictions upon LEA psychologists to make specific recommendations for specific and detailed provision.

Parents frequently claim that LEA educational psychologists are “too weak” to state what the child really needs and live under the orders of SEN Panels to recommend what may cost more than the LEA wishes to spend.

5.7 Making Inclusion Work

Inclusion not being allowed to Work. Its meaning ill defined.

The issue of Inclusion was frequently raised during the year. Whilst many parents/carers supported it they felt that LEAs use the word in order to keep down the costs of providing specialist provision rather than really providing for the needs of SEN children in an all inclusive mainstream school setting. Many felt forced to argue for a specialist placement because insufficient funds, advice and training were going into mainstream schools. This view was particularly strongly held by those caring for children with challenging behaviour. There was a view that LEAs had not properly defined the real meaning of Inclusion and contented themselves that it was assured through simply having SEN children in mainstream.

Many felt that insufficient was done to encourage the ASD or Dyslexia Friendly School despite the availability to schools of very useful good practice guides issued by the DfES and NHS.

6.0 The Richmond Pages

SOS!SEN began life in Richmond Upon Thames. A high proportion of its work remains there.

It is regrettable that the concerns raised in our report for 2002 – 2003 do not appear to have been addressed by Richmond LEA and that the number of concerns has, if anything, increased during the year 2003 – 2004. Some 3 months after our well attended Open Forum held in November 2003 three of us eventually had a meeting with the Director of Education to consider the issues raised at the meeting and in our 2002 – 2003 report. We were very pleased to have this opportunity but one meeting alone was not enough to deal with all concerns and the discussion tended to be general rather than detailed. It was agreed that there would be further meetings to pursue the issues but these did not happen. We recognise that the time of senior officers is very limited but it would have been helpful if the concerns raised had been the subject of detailed discussion within those sections of the LEA whose performance had been criticised by parents. We did make some very practical suggestions concerning improvements in management structure and quality of communication within the SEN Section but these have clearly not been implemented.

6.1 Trends in 2003 – 2004

Administration and Provision.

As the year went by we did notice some **improvements in the quality of Statement writing** even if that was after the parents themselves had proposed to the officers clear improvements. Nonetheless there is still a long way to go if provision is to be stated in such a specific and quantified way that the parent/carer will know clearly what support the child will get and the requirements of the Code of Practice complied with. (Surrey and Kingston we find compete for the all time woolliness prize in statement writing – intentional or unaware?).

Several parents complained that they felt they had been forced to wait an **unacceptable amount of time before getting clarity of their situation**. For example some complained that they felt that decisions on requests for Statutory Assessment were being delayed beyond the statutory 6 weeks so that appeal to SENDIST would be delayed. Others complained that their cases went to the SEN Panel late and that Proposed Statements or Final Statements were held back an unnecessary amount of time.

Problems **of unnecessarily stressful transport times** have been raised with in some cases young children enduring 3 hours or more bus travel each day as the pick-up service stretched out.

Many urged that **something should be done to ensure that parents/carers knew exactly who their child's case officer was** and that any changes should be made clear very promptly. The use of e-mail communication on such matters was suggested as a solution in many cases, although obviously not for all, and easy and cheap to use once the addresses had been collected.

Several parents/carers expressed the view that it was wrong for the LEA to expect the schools to carry out administrative tasks on its behalf when a centralised system would be more appropriate. This was particularly felt to be the case where consultation with parents and carers was concerned.

Unfortunately reports of **unduly negative, rude, or distant contacts with some LEA staff continued, although there was evidence of real kindness and concern from some**. Other comments included reference to assurances of concern which turned out to be rather hollow, and enthusiastic claims about the quality of future provision – claims that turned out to be largely unsubstantiated.

In more than one case this year we became aware of the **serious failure of individuals across the LEA, the schools, the Social Services and the NHS to inform each other of the very serious health, social and educational needs of some very vulnerable children**. One tragic case defied belief and in addition to SENDIST appeals this case of neglect is likely to result in further serious action

Provision

During the past 6 months there has been a sudden and significant increase in the number of parents/carers coming to us with concerns about provision for children with **ADHD and ADD in both primary and secondary schools**. We currently have 6 cases and all parents/carers claim that their children's schools do not have

the help and very special expertise to even cope, let alone help the children progress. ADHD and ADD often accompany Autistic Spectrum Disorders and here the expertise needed is, perhaps even more specialist.

Parents of children hoping for places in the new primary ASD Unit expressed concern that the **admissions profile** had never been clearly stated from the start. Several parents were therefore very disappointed and felt that a lot of “cherry picking” had gone on. **This view has important implications and it is hoped that the admissions profile for the new ASD secondary unit will be clear from the start so that provision can be suitably targeted and planned and parents kept very closely informed.**

6.2 Appeals to SENDIST 2003 - 2004

These rose significantly in 2003 –2004 and an urgent scrutiny of the reasons is, we believe, imperative. The figures are given below.

| | Appeals | children/10,000 school pop | Eng & Wales Ranking |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2002 -2003 | 27 | 13.34. | Third highest |
| 2003 -2004 | 39 | 19.5 | ? |
| Registered | 39 | | |
| Withdrawn | 13* | | |
| Conceded | 5^ | | |
| Decided | 10 | Upheld 8 | Dismissed 2 |
| Outstanding | 11 | | |

* Withdrawn can mean anything from parents withdrawing (rare) to withdrawal after an LEA has given in e.g. agreed Statutory Assessment before Tribunal (frequent)

^ Conceded - where the LEA write to the Tribunal stating they are willing to implement what the parents have asked for in their appeal.

| Types of Appeal | Number of appeals |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Against contents of statement (2&3) | 9 |
| Against contents (2,3&4) | 11. |
| Against refusal to assess | 15 |
| Against refusal to make a statement | 1 |
| Against refusal to re-assess | 3 |
| Autistic Spectrum & Speech & Language | 19 |
| MLD & SPLD - | 15 |

SOS!SEN played a considerable role during the year advising parents on procedures and going to Tribunal to represent or help parents. We did not, however, often advise appeal but did try to help parents to get amendments to statements to include better and more specific provision. Sadly they met with intransigence. It is our view that with a little more flexibility and reasoning on the part of the authority agreement could have been reached in advance of the Tribunal hearings and the enormous costs to both sides of preparing for and attending Tribunal would have been avoided.

7.0 Next Year 2004 – 2005

7.1 New Members

We have expanded our team and shall need to restructure our system in order to meet our increasing level of activity. Part of the restructuring will inevitably include the expansion of parent/carer support for other parent/carers. Nothing is more reassuring for those battling for their children's educational rights than the support of others who have been through the system.

7.2 Workshops

The 6 held over the year were well attended with an average of 22 present. We plan to offer them again during the daytime when it is easier for some parents to come. They will cover

- interpreting the Code
- requesting Statutory Assessment
- checking a Proposed Statement
- negotiating and appealing the Statement
- Annual Review and I.E.P.s
- maintaining the provision and requesting re-assessment.

Future evening workshops will include

- Lessons Learned (from a parent with great experience) Dec. 6th
- Working with the Parent Partnership Worker Date awaited
- Working with the Parent Governor Representatives. Date awaited.

STOP PRESS

We are delighted to announce

Weekend 14/15 May 2005 Daytime Workshop

STATEMENTING & TRIBUNALS

A full training course for parents/carers as well as therapists, SENCOs, and other professionals in the SEN world.

More information to follow.

7.3 Fund Raising Events

The first of the year was a highly successful Tapas Evening.

Next Dec.11 The Toy Swap Shop
Dec. 12 Kids Disco (free)

Contact us for more information.

HELP! We always welcome it - with fund raising or on the Helpline. Do please contact us.

8.0 Conclusion

It has been a very busy year indeed and we have been able to help a lot of people. We believe our success has been the result of a number of factors.

1. **We retain at all times our independence so it can never be said we are under the financial or management influence of any other organization.**
2. We seek training opportunities, develop our resource base and, wherever possible obtain the best possible legal advice we can.
3. We believe that we are there to try to help empower the callers and so encourage them to front run their own attempts to get the best for their children.
4. When parents do not feel they can fully cope alone our practical support comes in and is given freely and without financial or other conditions. We encourage them to give that support on to others next time.
- 5 **We are persistent.**

Advice to All Concerned with Children's Rights to SEN

- Obtain a copy of the SEN Code of Practice. It's vital and it's free. Phone 0845 60 222 60. Please quote reference DfES 581/2001.
- Remember parents and children have rights under the Data Protection Act 1998 to receive from an LEA a full set of records concerning their children and including copies of e-mails, notes of phone calls and meetings etc. There may be up to a 40 day wait but it's worth it. Write to the Council's Chief Executive in the first instance, referring to the Act. This is invaluable for someone thinking of challenging at Tribunal. It is amazing what can be unearthed and also to discover what is missing!
- Consider periodically whether a child's needs have changed and whether the initial assessments are still accurate. Remember that whilst statements may be changed by LEAs the appendices upon which they were originally based may be hopelessly out of date.
- If there are any doubts about a child's continuing needs or provision for them seek advice at once.
- Record via notes etc. details of all conversations (including telephone ones) with LEA officers and other interested persons, and confirm, in writing, what has been agreed.
- Keep copies of all correspondence sent and received.
- Be persistent
- **Watch out for the Weasel Words from LEAs**

Here are a few examples from LEAs

- *That's nothing to do with us, it's the Health Authority/the school*
- *We don't put into the statement what the school is going to provide*
- *Well, the legislation/the courts/ the Code are all very well but here in Nutshire we have our own way of doing things*
- *There's no point in putting it in Part 3 because the NHS can provide it under Part 6*
- *We've never done/heard/ seen that before*
- *That can be looked at the Annual review*
- *We need to keep some flexibility*
- *That can be dealt with in the IEP*

Beware of all of these. They are an attempt to get round the legal position or Code of Practice.

- *You know you are really are rather fortunate to get so much help. You wouldn't get that amount in another authority*

- *That will be a very suitable school for your child. We must tell you about all the exciting work and training programmes in place at the school*
 - *With all the investment we are making in it, it will become a centre of excellence.*
- **You are not fortunate at all, if your child is not getting what he really needs in order to make adequate progress. The school may be having training programmes etc. but check carefully. Is the school one which is designated and set up to meet your child's special needs? "A centre of excellence" is what exactly, and can your child wait for it to become one?**

Acknowledgments.

We thank all those who spread the word about our existence, who we are, and what we do:-

**the Headteachers
the SENCOs
SEN Governors**

**Hampton Online <www.hampton-online.co.uk>
The Richmond and Twickenham Times,
The Informer.**

The VIPS in SEN website <www.vips-in-sen.co.uk>

the volunteers who tirelessly and voluntarily continue to give their time and expertise

and above all the parents/carers who contribute their skills, and those who, even when their difficulties have been resolved, have continued to support our fund raising activities and to help each other.