

Shropshire SENCO Workload Review

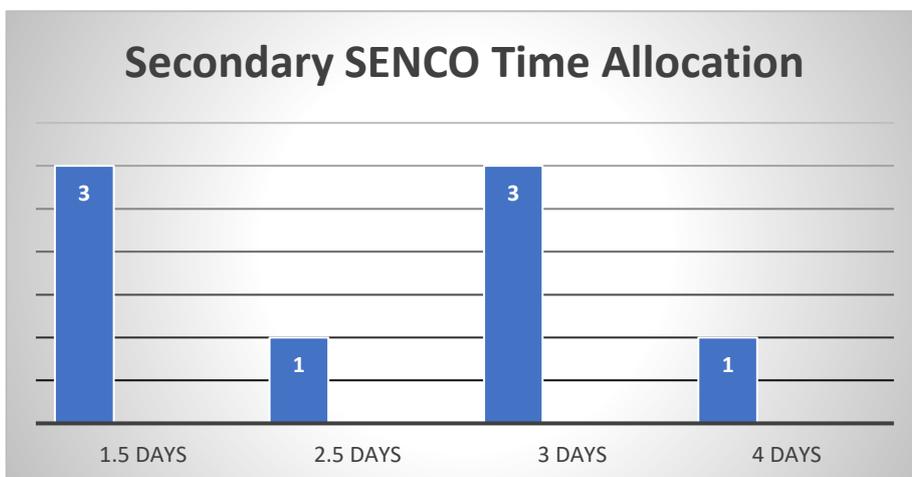
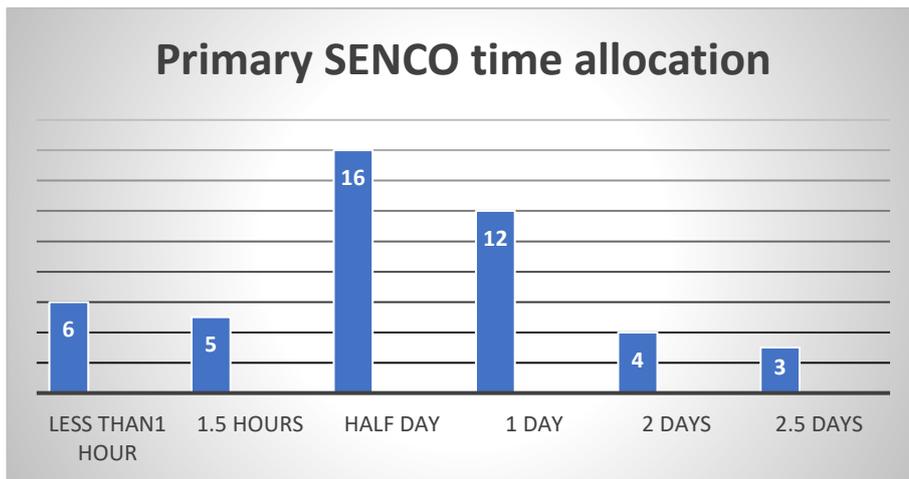
In September 2018, Bath Spa University, Nasen and the NEU launched the National SENCO Workload survey. The survey aimed to understand the nature of the SENCO workload across varying contexts in order to capture the breadth and depth of the SENCO role. The results of this survey can be found at: <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/education/research/senco-workload>

The National Survey was used as a basis to carry out research in Shropshire to gain a greater understanding of the role of SENCOs within the county and to consider what actions could be taken locally to support SENCOs to effectively facilitate their role.

Of the two roles that are legally required in a school, the SENCO and the Headteacher, only the SENCO is required to be a qualified teacher. Furthermore, those appointed to the role of SENCO after 1st September 2009 are required to complete the masters-level National Award for SEN Coordination. This demonstrates the critical importance of the SENCO and why it matters that we give them the capacity to perform their role effectively.

There are 150 schools in Shropshire, however SENCOs are often working across multiple schools as part of a Multi Academy Trust or a Federation. 54 SENCOs responded to the survey.

- **How much time per week is officially allocated to your SENCO role?**



- 6.91 The school should ensure that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out these functions. This should include providing the SENCO with sufficient administrative support and time away from teaching to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in a similar way to other important strategic roles within a school.
- 6.92 It may be appropriate for a number of smaller primary schools to share a SENCO employed to work across the individual schools, where they meet the other requirements set out in this chapter of the Code. Schools can consider this arrangement where it secures sufficient time away from teaching and sufficient administrative support to enable the SENCO to fulfil the role effectively for the total registered pupil population across all of the schools involved.
- 6.93 Where such a shared approach is taken the SENCO should not normally have a significant class teaching commitment. Such a shared SENCO role should not be carried out by a headteacher at one of the schools.
- 6.94 Schools should review the effectiveness of such a shared SENCO role regularly and should not persist with it where there is evidence of a negative impact on the quality of SEN provision, or the progress of pupils with SEN.

The size and nature of schools in Shropshire varies enormously. It is therefore difficult to determine how much time should be allocated to the SENCO role in a particular setting. The SEND Code of Practice offers some guidance;

Where SENCOs are also class teachers within the school, and therefore 'on-site' for the majority of the time, they report that they are able to maintain a good overview of the SEN provision and are able to:

*6.90 "overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy"
(The Role of the SENCO - SEN CoP)*

Where the SENCO is part-time, or working across multiple settings, they report that it is difficult to gain an in-depth understand of the individual needs of children and develop the necessary relationships with the children, parents and colleagues to fulfil their role effectively. Some SENCOs reported that they are only in their schools ½ day per week or 1 day a fortnight. It is difficult to determine whether the SEN of children are being met effectively in these settings unless provision is being met through a whole school approach, with all staff trained and empowered to meet the additional needs of children with additional needs. As indicated in the SEN Code of Practice, the effectiveness of the provision to meet the needs of this cohort should to be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure the children are making progress.

Time that is allocated to the SEN role is often difficult to determine because many SENCOs have other roles within school that also places demands on their 'non-teaching/allocated' time.

- **What other roles do you hold in school?**

Of the 54 SENCOs who responded to the survey 41 of them reported that they have another role within school, other than class teacher.

These roles included:

- Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher / Assistant Headteacher
- Early Help Co-ordinator
- Looked After Children (LAC) co-ordinator
- Mental Health Lead
- EAL Lead
- Safeguarding Designated Lead/Second
- Inclusion Co-ordinator
- Subject Co-ordinator
- Governor

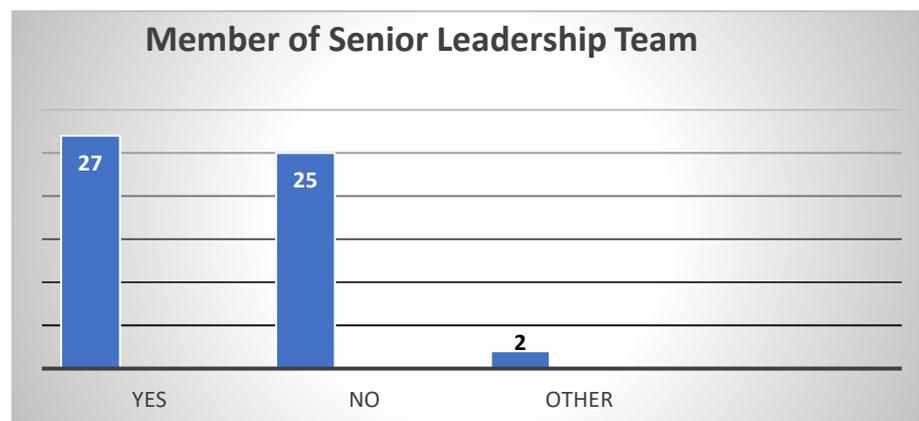
“Only a quarter of respondents (26%) felt that the role was manageable for one person, with 78% of SENCOs stating that other roles and/or tasks routinely pulled them away from being able to carry out the SENCO role effectively.”

(Bath Spa / Nasen SENCO Workload report)

- **Are you part of the Senior Leadership Team within your school?**

It is suggested within the SEN Code of practice that the SENCO is part of the school senior leadership team:

6.87 The SENCO has an important role to play with the headteacher and governing body, in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in the school. They will be most effective in that role if they are part of the school leadership team.



Over half of SENCOs are part of their school SLT, however for a number of these this is due to their 'other role' and not specifically linked to their SENCO role. Some reported that they have SLT responsibilities but are not 'paid' to fulfil this role.

- **What regular deployable support do you have in school to support with your workload?**

Teaching Assistants	Specialist Teachers	Admin Support	Assistant SENCO	No Support	Other
28	6	17	6	19	4

There was some confusion with the response to this question with respondents indicating that some of the identified staff were available to meet the needs of the children and not necessarily available to support them with their workload. For some SENCOs they are responsible for the deployment, management and appraisal of the support staff which increases workload!

"Performance management of 18 TA's/HLTA's and school librarian"

Shropshire Secondary SENCO

- **Describe your typical use of SENCO time.**

Paperwork – referrals, AR's	Delivering Interventions
Pupil Observation	Meetings with parents
Supporting colleagues	Meeting with colleagues to discuss children
Delivering training	Leading formal meetings e.g. Annual Reviews
Attending courses/CPD/network meetings	Accompanying parents/children for transitions
Research	Assessing pupils e.g. Dyslexia screening
Phone calls/e-mails to external agencies	Preparing resources
Meetings with external agencies	Auditing/ordering resources
Checking progress of pupils	Updating website
Measuring impact of interventions/analysing data	Managing behaviour
TA Deployment/training and appraisal	Learning walks
Exam concessions	Chasing staff for info
Tasks linked to other roles eg PEPS, LAC reviews	Pupil issues
Filing and copying reports	Preparing report for gov's
Anxiety sessions	Prep for lunchtime clubs/support
Pupil voice	

"I spend the majority of my time completing paperwork"

"I spend no time working with children"

"Admin, admin, admin..."

It is very clear that there are considerable demands on SENCOs time. One of the aims of this report was to consider what could be done to support the role and ensure SENCOs are able to effectively meet the needs of the SEN cohort within schools. Many of the tasks highlighted above appear to be administrative tasks that could be completed or supported by someone within the administrative team. This is likely to be more cost effective for a school with the added benefit that admin staff are often able to be more flexible with their time and are not as constrained by timetable demands as are many SENCOs, who also have significant teaching commitments. One outcome of this survey is to consider offering SEN specific training for admin staff to enable them to provide effective support to the school SENCO.

“ administrative activities being the most commonly cited SENCO activity, only 15% of primary SENCOs stated that they had access to regular, administrative support for workload.”

(Bath Spa / Nasen SENCO Workload report)

- **If you work additional hours, how do you fit them into your week?**

PPA Time	Before School	After School	Evenings	Lunchtime	1 day @ Weekend	2 days @ Weekend	Some of the holidays
29	37	43	35	39	15	6	36

SENCOs report that in order to fulfil the demands of the role they regularly have to put in additional hours, often unpaid. The Bath Spa/Nasen report identified that many SENCOs are employed part-time but have to work on their days off;

- *I am meant to be part-time, working three days a week, but I also work on my two days off without any payment.*
- *I am only contracted for 2.5 days a week, so use the 2.5 days I do not work to complete paperwork at home (unpaid).*
- *I work part-time (4 days) and regularly work on my non work day.*

This is a similar picture within Shropshire with several respondents completing SENCO work on their non-working days.