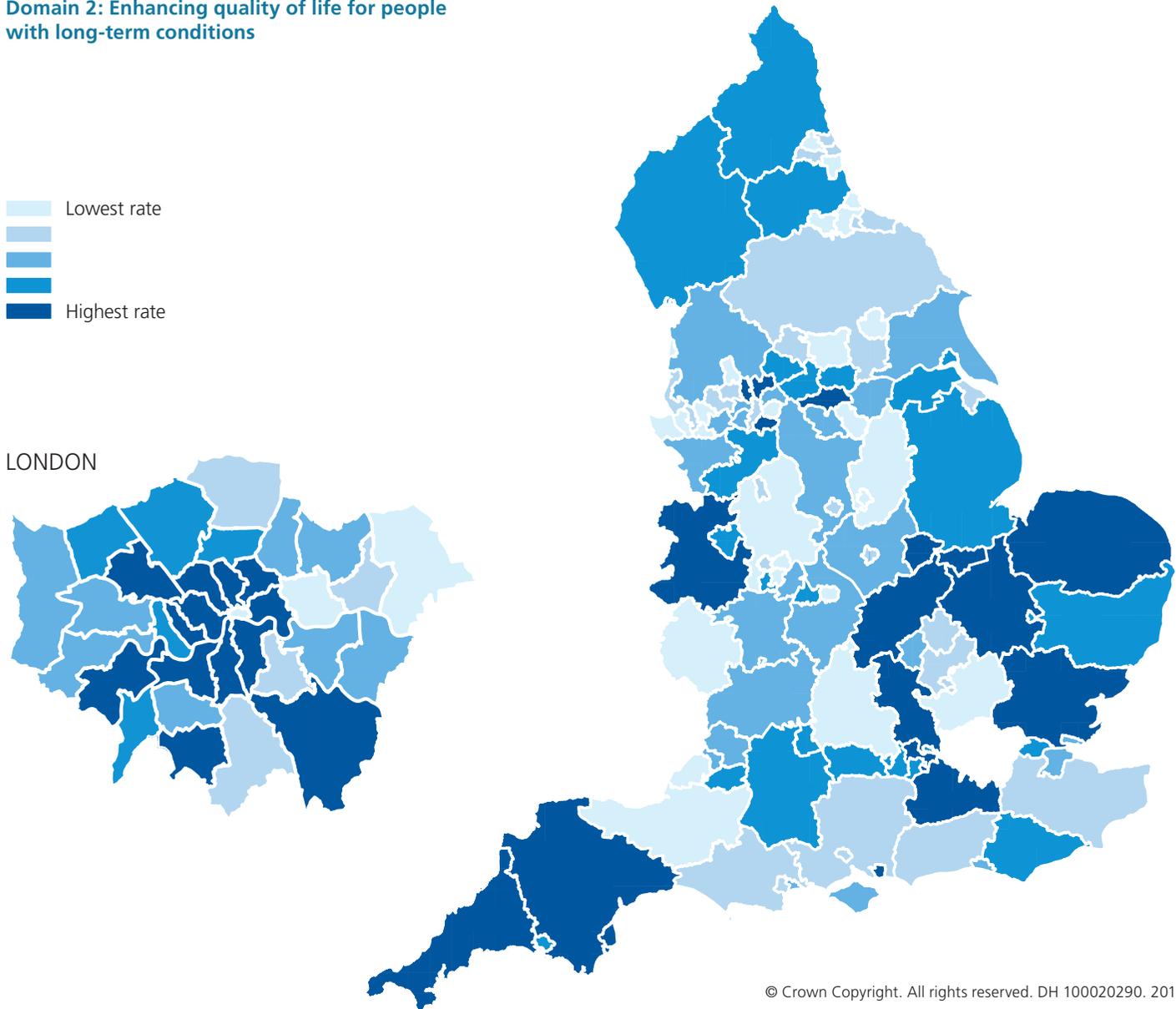


PROBLEMS OF LEARNING DISABILITY

**Map 18:** Percentage of primary school children in state-funded schools with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) by local authority at January 2011

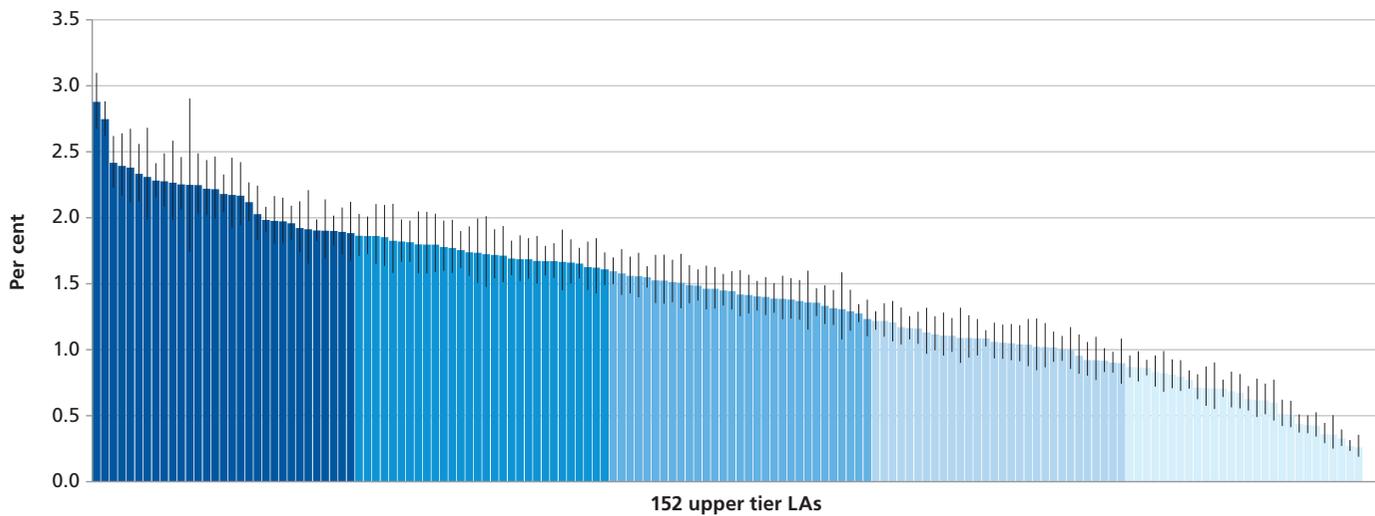
Domain 2: Enhancing quality of life for people with long-term conditions



Lowest rate  
 Highest rate

LONDON

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## Context

Children with special educational needs (SEN) have a learning difficulty that requires special educational provision. A learning difficulty means the child has:

- › Significantly greater difficulty learning than the majority of children in the same age-group;
- › A disability preventing or hindering them from using general educational facilities provided in the local authority (LA) for children of the same age-group.

There are four levels of special educational provision: usual support, School Action, School Action Plus, and a statement of SEN. Children with a statement of SEN are either not making progress under School Action or School Action Plus or they require considerable additional support due to severe and complex needs. Children in special schools have a statement of SEN.

The statement has six parts:

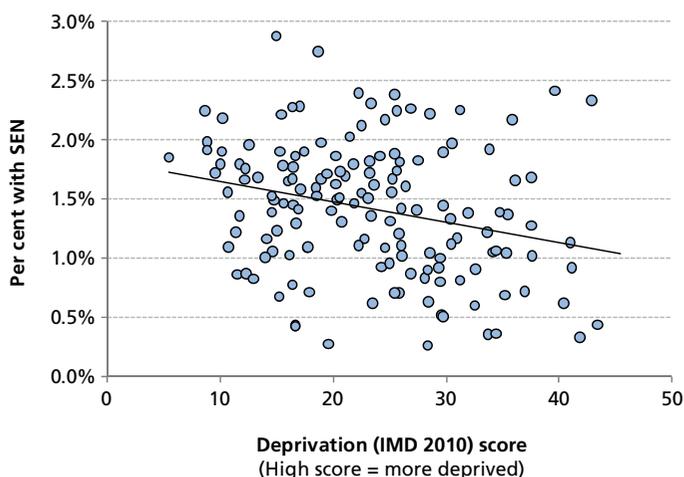
- › General information about the child;
- › Description of the child's needs following assessment;
- › Help to be given to meet the child's needs;
- › Type of school the child should attend, and arrangements for out of school hours or off school premises;
- › The child's non-educational needs;
- › Help the child will get to meet non-educational needs.<sup>1</sup>

The local authority reviews the statement at least once a year.

## Magnitude of variation

For upper-tier local authorities in England, the percentage of primary school children in state-funded schools with a statement of SEN ranges from 0.3% to 2.9% (11-fold variation). When the five upper-tier LAs with the highest percentages and the five upper-tier LAs with the lowest percentages are excluded, the range is 0.4–2.3%, and the variation is approaching sixfold.

**Figure 18.1: Pupils (%) with a statement of SEN in relation to deprivation**



<sup>1</sup> [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/SpecialEducationalNeeds/DG\\_4000870](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/SpecialEducationalNeeds/DG_4000870)

Possible reasons for variation are differences in:

- › the prevalence of complex medical conditions, although it is unlikely to account for the degree observed;
- › deprivation levels in different areas (see Figure 18.1);
- › child health service spending (SEN data, collected by local authority, and community health spend, collected by PCT, cannot be correlated).

The most plausible explanation is the lack of set criteria governing different levels of support in school, leading to variation in interpretation among, and within, localities during decision-making about writing a statement of SEN. However, this factor is most amenable to intervention by commissioners.

## Options for action

All levels of identified need for support in school and the proposed measures of early development in the Tickell Report (see "Resources") together with measures in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (statutory assessment requirement for children reaching the end of the Foundation Stage) could be analysed in relation to:

- › child health service spending;
- › availability of nursery places;
- › availability of staff, such as speech therapists.

Such timely identification of potential future needs, emphasising early years identification and risk assessment, would enable commissioners and health and education professionals to create bespoke funding and resource allocation plans for supporting children with additional needs in each local population. This will deliver higher-quality services through:

- › Greater flexibility and responsiveness to local needs;
- › Evidence-based modelling of future workload to inform workforce planning;
- › Allowing redeployment of resources to prevention/early intervention through better and earlier identification of at-risk children;
- › More efficient use of educational and community health resources.

Commissioners in agencies caring for children with additional needs should:

- › share information on performance;
- › collaborate to standardise the assessment process.

## RESOURCES

- › Tickell C (2011) The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning. An Independent Report on the Early Years Foundation Stage to Her Majesty's Government. <http://media.education.gov.uk/MediaFiles/B/1/5/%7BB15EFF0D-A4DF-4294-93A1-1E1B88C13F68%7DTickell%20review.pdf>
- › Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Data. <http://data.gov.uk/dataset/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-england-2010>
- › Early Years Foundation Stage Profile – assessment scales reference sheet. [http://www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/assets/poster\\_v8\\_aw.pdf](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/assets/poster_v8_aw.pdf)

*This indicator is from the Child Health Themed Atlas*