**Autonomy Rights and Children with Special and Additional Support Needs:** Research methods

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| **Type of data** | **Nature of data to be gathered** | **Researchers** |
| Element 1: Review of literature, policy, legislation, and administrative data. | Gathering and synthesis of academic and policy literature, legislation and administrative data. | Professor Sheila Riddell, Professor Neville Harris, Dr James MacAllister, RFs University of Edinburgh and Manchester |
| Element 2: Key informant interviews | 20 interviews with KIs in England and Scotland (**40 in total**) | Professor Sheila Riddell, Professor Neville Harris, Dr James MacAllister, RFs University of Edinburgh and Manchester |
| Element 3: Local authority questionnaire survey | Survey administered to officer with responsibility for SEN/ASN policy in **152** English LAs | Professor Sheila Riddell, Professor Neville Harris, Dr Grace Kong, RFs University of Edinburgh and Manchester |
| Element 4: Case studies of children/young people with SEN/ASN in **6 local authorities** | Interviews with LA staff (**24 interviews in total**)  Case studies of **48** children and young people with SEN/ASN based on: (i) interviews, observation and other types of data gathering with the child/young person (e.g. drawings and photographs); (ii) interviews with parent/carer, teacher and two other significant individuals. **192 interviews in total.** | Professor Sheila Riddell, Professor Neville Harris, Dr James MacAllister, RFs University of Edinburgh and Manchester |

## (1) Review of literature, policy, legislation and administrative data (April–July 2017)

Electronic databases (including the British Education Research Index, ERIC, Medline, Social Science Citation Index) were searched using appropriate keywords. The literature search was restricted to English language publications and work conducted over the past 10 years. The international literature on children’s rights of participation and redress was examined, with a focus on education and other relevant spheres of social policy (e.g. youth justice, family law and health). The ‘grey’ literature (including reports of evaluations and policy reviews conducted by practitioner or policy bodies which may not be in the public domain) was also examined, as was relevant administrative data published by the Scottish Government, the Department for Education and the tribunal systems in both jurisdictions. The overall aim of this review was to locate the exercise of rights in SEN/ASN within a broader socio-legal and international context. A key concept to be explored was that of autonomy, its significance and implications for fundamental rights and the way in which children’s participatory rights are realised in different types of education systems in Europe and in a wider international context.

## (2) Key informant interviews (April–July 2017)

Up to 20 interviews were conducted in both England and Scotland (40 in total) with key players in government and organisations promoting and delivering SEN/ASN services. Their purpose was to sensitise the research team to important themes concerning the realisation of children and young people’s rights. Key informants included: Scottish Government and DfE representatives; Commissioners for Children and Young People; organisations representing children and young people with different types of SEN/ASN; parents’/carers’ forums; local authorities; schools; dispute resolution and advocacy services. School interviewees will be drawn from local authority maintained mainstream and special schools, other special schools and (England only) academies and free schools.

## (3) Local authority questionnaire survey (April – August 2017)

Drawing on the central themes arising in the key informant interviews, a questionnaire survey was developed and administered to the responsible officer for SEN/ASN in all English local authorities. A survey was used in our previous collaborative research and achieved a good response rate.

## (4) In-depth case studies of children/young people with SEN/ASN (9 months, Aug. 2017–April 2018)

Six LAs were identified (3 in England and 3 in Scotland) with different social and geographical profiles and SEN/ASN policies and practices reflected in patterns of identification, placement, funding and support for children’s rights[[1]](#footnote-1).

Within each authority, **eight case studies** of children and young people with SEN/ASN were conducted. (**48 in total; 24 in each jurisdiction**). The case studies, based on semi-structured interviews and observations with children and young people and significant others, were used to explore factors affecting the exercise of rights of participation and redress. The interviews focussed on children and young people’s accounts of their involvement in decisions on matters such as school choice, educational provision, funding including individual budgets (where appropriate), the resolution of disagreements including mediation and tribunals, curriculum and planning. The sampling criteria for the child and family case studies focussed on the four most common overall official categories of SEN/ASN (Riddell et al., 2016): (1) social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Scotland) and social, emotional and mental health difficulties (England); (2) moderate learning difficulties; (3) speech, language and communication difficulties; and (4) autistic spectrum disorder. In each authority there were two case studies (one for a child at primary education stage, the other for one at secondary stage) for each of these four categories of SEN/ASN.

In addition to these variables, children and young people were drawn from different deprivation quintiles[[2]](#footnote-2), ethnic groups and age groups, and reflected a gender balance. Cases were drawn from different types of school (local authority maintained mainstream and special; academies (England only); other special schools).

Within each of the 48 case studies, we interviewed the child or young person, their parents/carers and up to two significant others, such as a teacher, educational psychologist or parent partnership officer (**up to four interviews per case study, maximum of 192 interviews in total**). The interviews with children/young people and parents/carers were conducted either in the home or in another setting chosen by the adult. In some cases, it may be necessary to interview the children and adults together.

In order to understand the way in which the **school** environment supports the rights of children and young people with SEN/ASN, we undertook at least half a day’s classroom observation per child/young person (subject to permission), as well as interviews and other activities.

1. Working in six local authorities will provide us with insight into the realisation of rights in different social and geographical contexts, without sacrificing the depth of analysis required in qualitative research. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. We will use the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)