

# The Rise of Autism in an Educational Context

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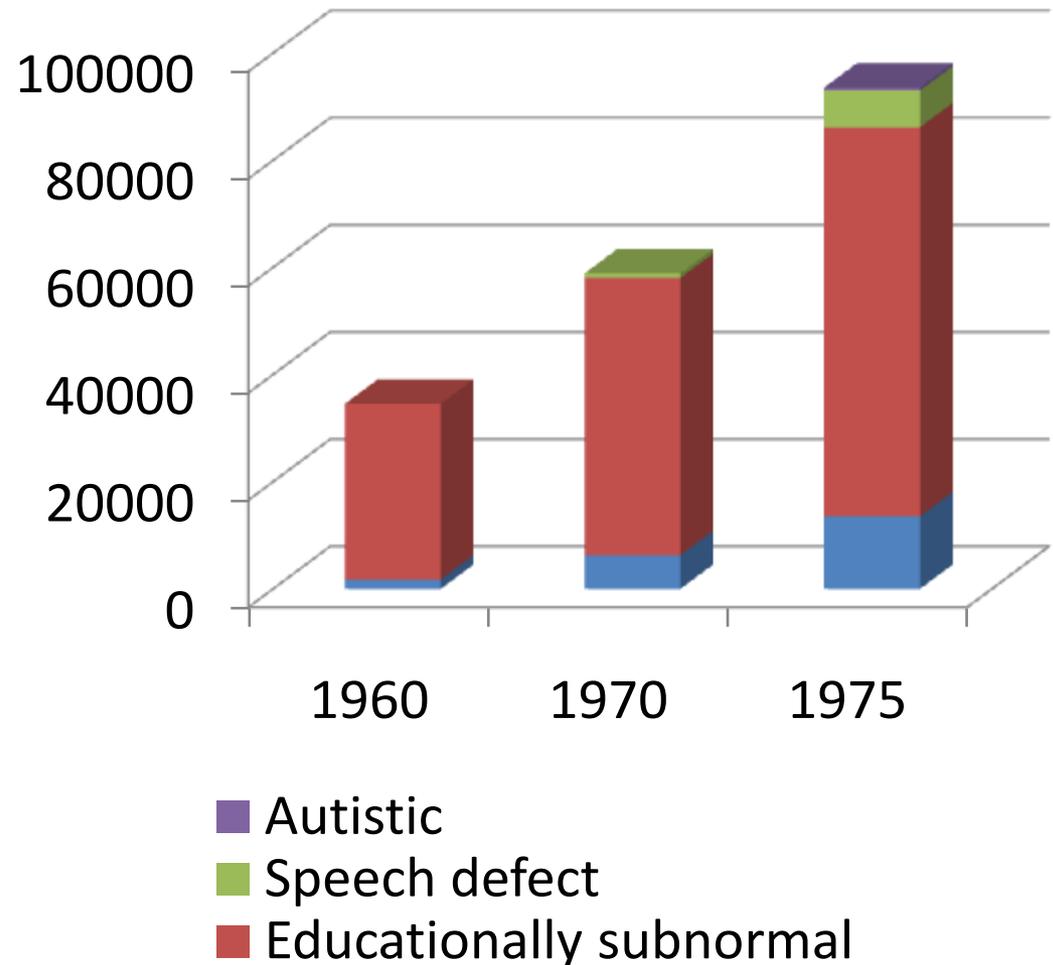
King's College, London



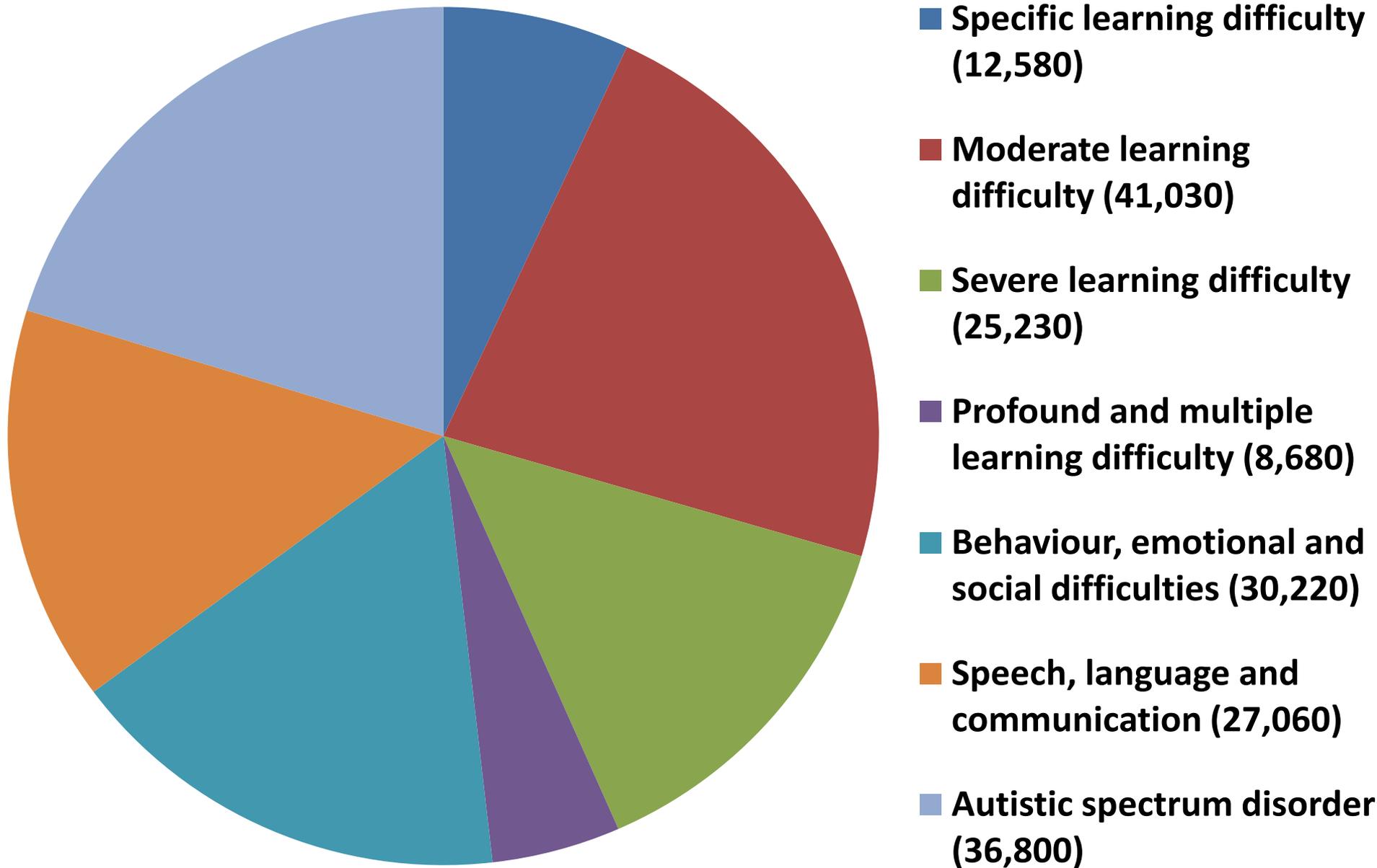
FIG. 2. A ward for imbeciles in a mental deficiency hospital, showing the overcrowding and understaffing which are so widespread at present.

# Prevalence Rates and Administration

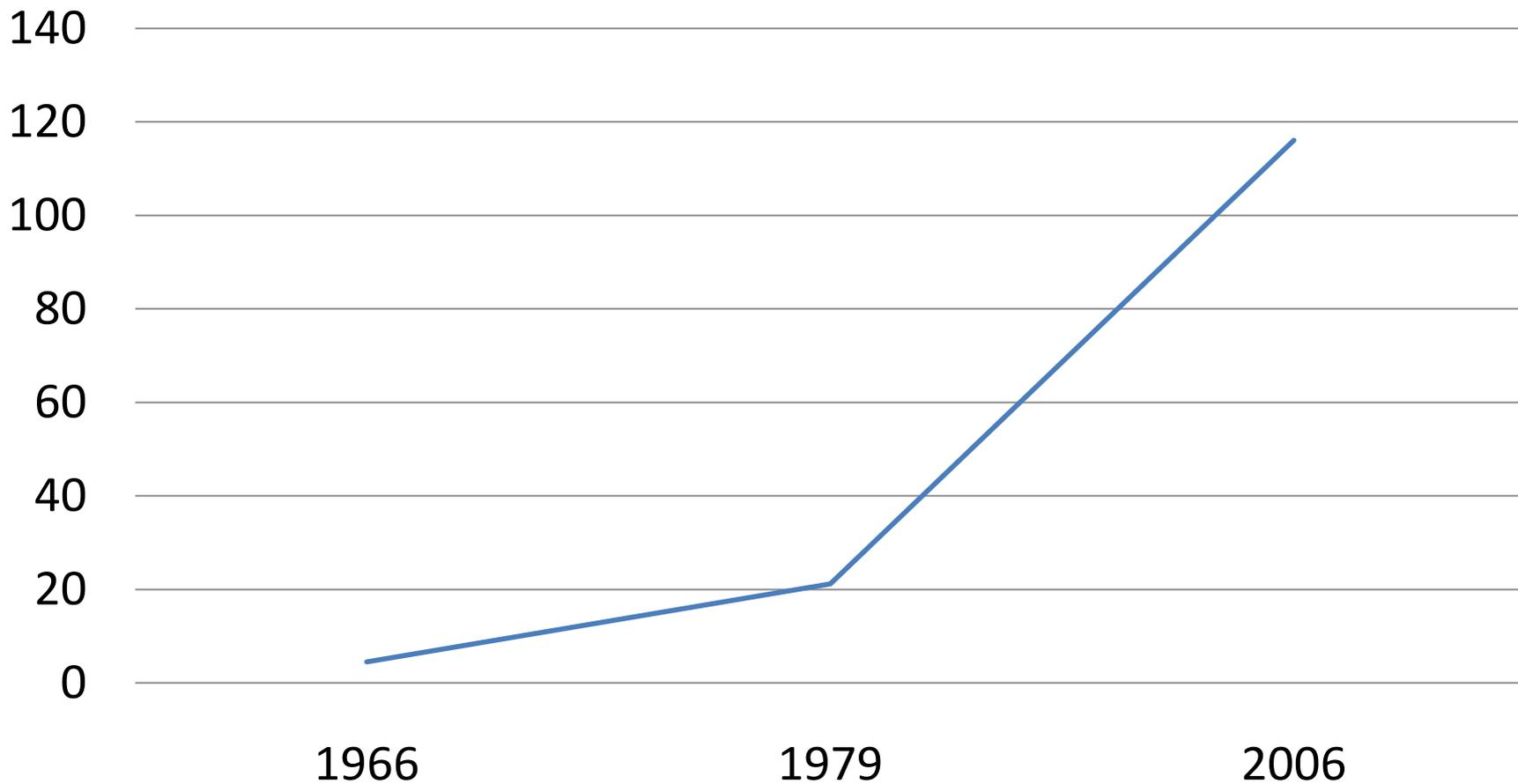
- After the 1944 Education Act, the Department of Education collected figures on all 'educable' children who required specialist forms of education in England and Wales.
- After the closure of Mental deficiency institutions in 1959, the numbers of children labelled 'maladjusted', 'educationally subnormal', 'speech defect' and 'autistic' increase.



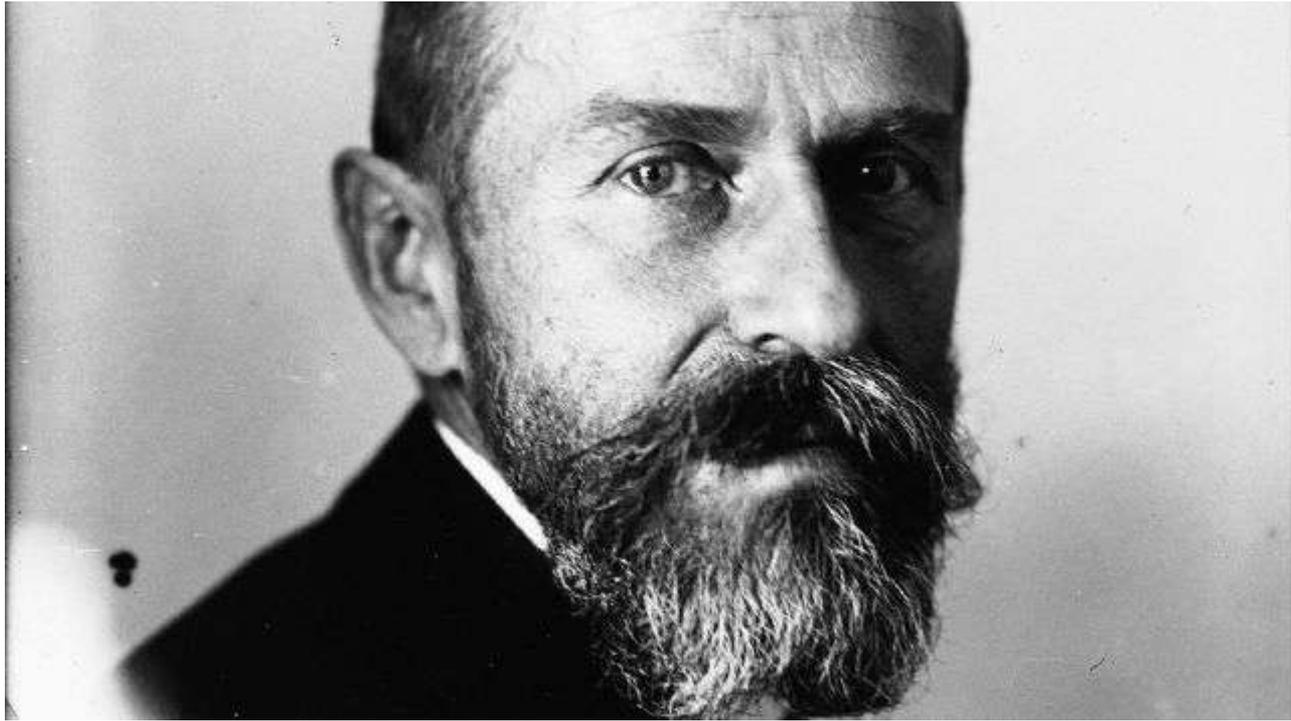
# Number of children in England with a Statement of Special Educational Need (DCSF 2009)



# Epidemiological Studies of Autism in the UK



— Number of children per 10,000 with autism and related conditions



- Bleuler's *Dementia praecox or the group of schizophrenias* (1911) introduces the concepts of 'schizophrenia' (split-mind) and 'autism'.
- The word 'autism' is derived from Freud's 'autoerotism' and Pierre Janet's *perte de la fonction du réel*.



Susan Isaacs  
1885-1948



Anna Freud 1895-1982



Melanie Klein  
1882-1960

# Children, Institutions and Mental States



**Maudsley Hospital – Children's Outpatient Department 1939**

- 1953 – The World Health Organisation’s Third Expert Committee on Mental Health publishes a report on the asylum system
- 1957 – The Percy Report is published. It argues that individuals with ‘mental’ or ‘personality’ problems and illnesses should be treated under the law:  
*‘with no more restriction of liberty or legal formality than is applied to people who need care because of other types of illness, disability or social or economic difficulty’*
- 1959 – Mental Health Act
- 1960s – Major increase in social-scientific and epidemiological studies of psychiatric disorder.

“The most exciting thing, which is still a frontier to be crossed, is the work on causes and treatment of so-called autistic – sometimes called schizoid, sometimes psychotic – children, which is almost unknown territory. These children are apparently schizoids who live in a dream world. They seem intelligent, but it is impossible to touch them even with treatment that is nowadays giving success in 75 per cent of normal adult schizoids. We must pay attention to that factor.”

**William Compton Carr (Conservative MP for  
Barons Court)**

**Houses of Parliament, May, 1960**

- 1963 – National Autistic Society (NAS) Established
- 1963 – NAS make a deputation to Ministers of Health and Education calling for autistic children to become the responsibility of the Education rather than Health authorities
- 1965 – First Autistic School established by Sybil Elgar
- 1968 – Second Autistic School established by Helen Allison



Helen Allison  
c.1968



Sybil Elgar School c.1965



Helen Allison School c.1968

1. Gross and sustained impairment of emotional relationships with people
2. Apparent unawareness of his own personal identity
3. Pathological preoccupation with particular objects
4. Sustained resistance to change in the environment
5. Abnormal perceptual experience
6. Acute, excessive and seemingly illogical anxiety
7. Speech may have been lost or never acquired
8. Distortion in motility patterns
9. A background of serious retardation in which islets of normal, near normal, or exceptional intellectual function or skill may appear

1961-Mildred Creak and the working party.

Nine diagnostic points to identify 'schizophrenic syndrome in childhood'

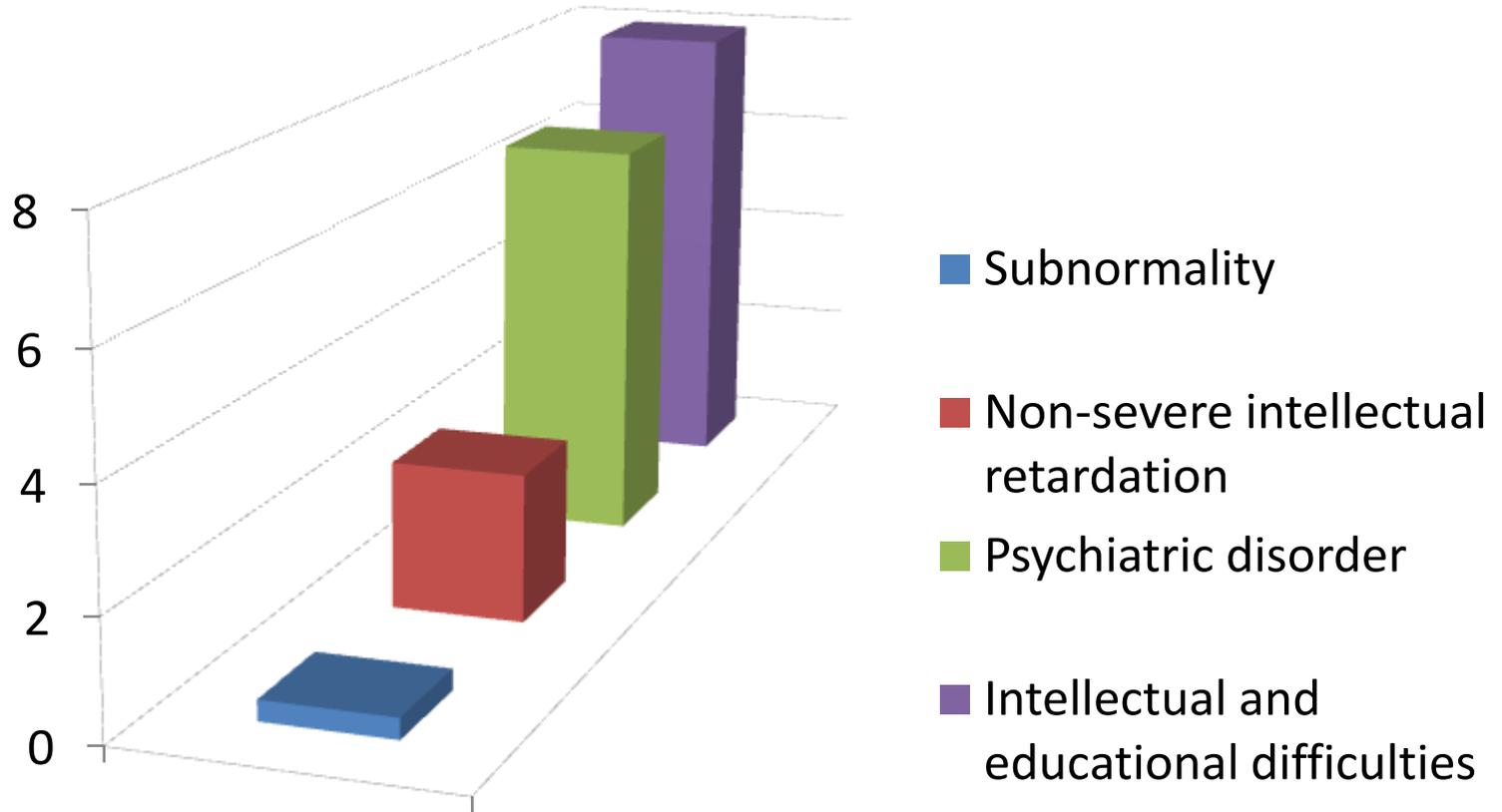
Item	Behaviour rated	Mean percentage scores and types of children		
		Autistic Group A (N=15)	Group B (N=17)	Non-Autistic Group C (N=22)
<i>All speech items *</i>		54	38	12
1.	Speech not used for communication	63	33	0
2.	Reversal of pronouns	21	12	8
3.	Echolalia	67	46	25
4.	Repetition of phrases	67	58	13
<i>All social behaviour items</i>		72	53	14
5.	Visual avoidance	53	38	2
6.	Solitary	97	70	32
7.	Ignores children	87	79	15
8.	Aloof and distant	97	70	18
9.	Walks/looks through people	30	6	0
<i>All movement peculiarity items</i>		40	28	8
10.	Self spinning	47	14	0
11.	Jumping	43	44	14
12.	Flapping	33	14	14
13.	Toe walking	13	18	9
14.	Other marked mannerisms	63	47	5
<i>All "auditory" items</i>		45	34	10
15.	Behaves as if deaf	67	50	5
16.	Covers ears	47	26	11
17.	Distress at noise	23	26	14
<i>All repetitive/ritualistic items</i>		49	16	7
18.	Elaborate food fads	27	6	2
19.	Lines and patterns with objects	43	9	0
20.	Spinning objects	17	9	5
21.	Other elaborate ritual play	83	35	11
22.	Carrying, banging, twirling etc. objects	37	38	9
23.	Insistence on sameness (objects)	53	9	15
24.	Insistence on sameness (events)	80	12	9

\* Speaking children only

1964 - Victor Lotter: Behavioural items for autism

# Education, Health, Behaviour – 1970

Michael Rutter, Jack Tizard and Kingsley Whitmore

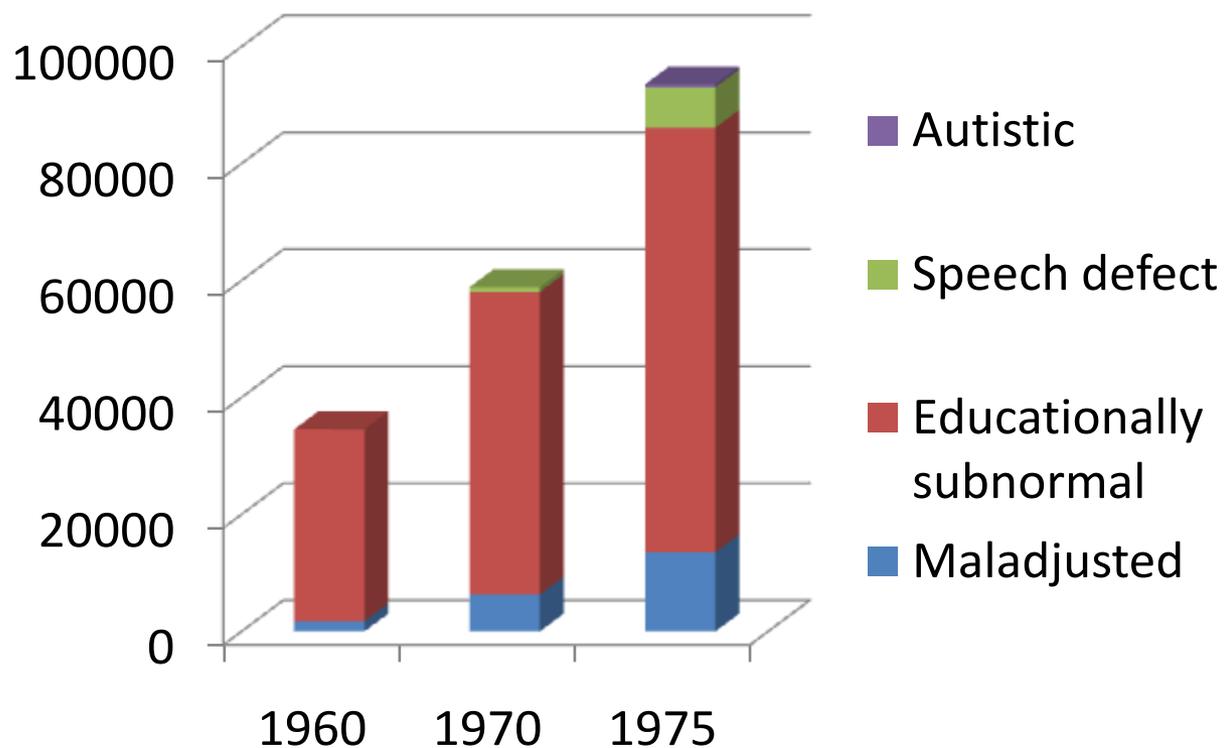


Administrative  
rates per 100  
children

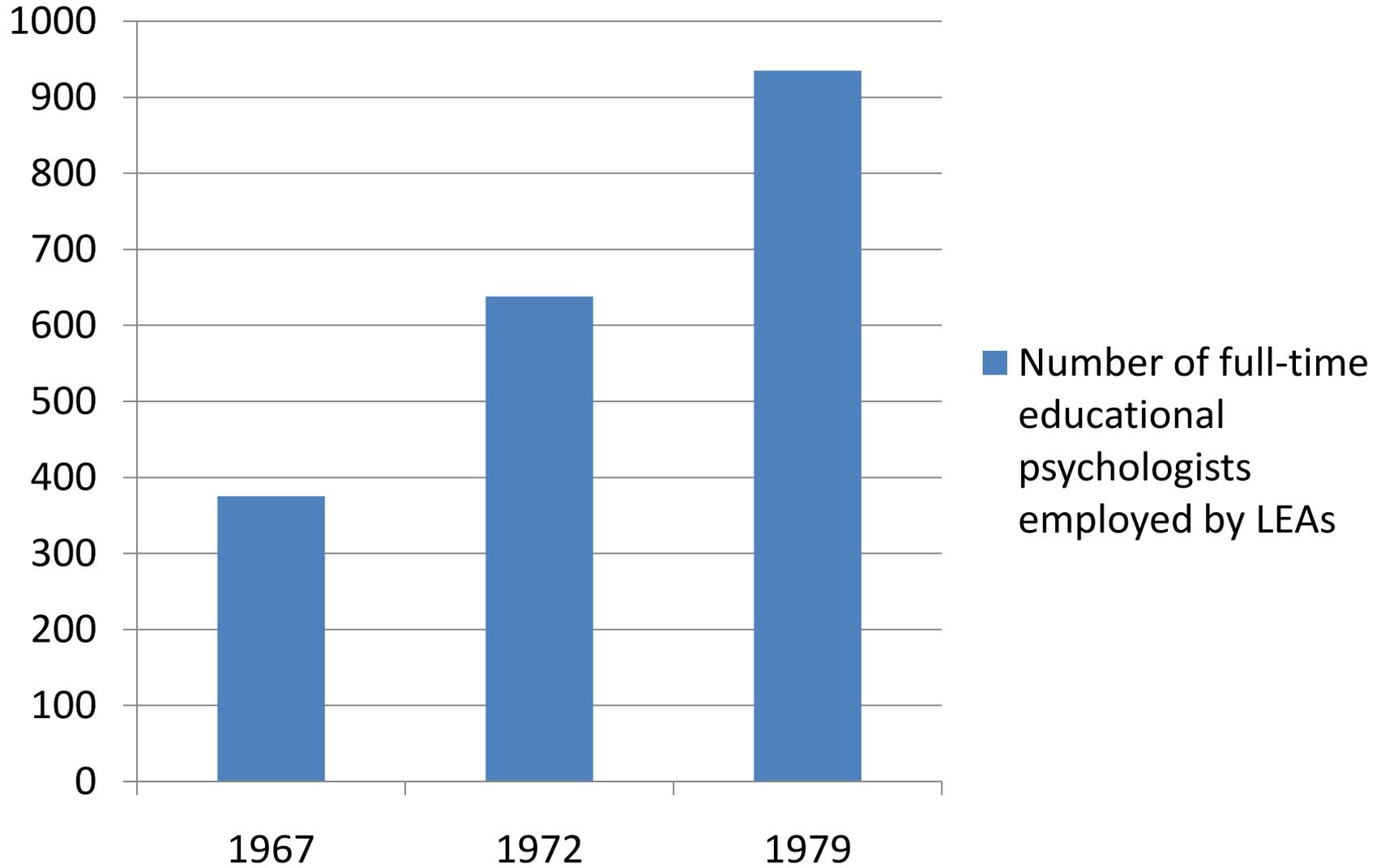
# 1970

- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Bill (1970) - 'Autism' is listed as a disability which assures special education.
- Education (Handicapped Children) Act (1970) – Final closure of all schools for children with 'subnormality' administered by Health Authorities.

1970: All children become the full responsibility of the Department of Education and Science



## The rise of educational psychology



# ‘Autistic Features’

- ‘Autism’, which had been a minor category within childhood schizophrenia begins to be observed in increasing numbers of children
- Clinicians and educationalists begin to use the term ‘autistic features’

“a severely subnormal boy, developing mentally at about one third the normal rate, whose behaviour shows some autistic features, but he does not in many respects fit the classic picture of the autistic child. It seemed to me that many of his ‘autistic’ behaviours were symptoms of either a) his developmental stage – it is normal for 3 yr olds to have violent temper tantrums, or b) his poor comprehension of instructions and of social situations or c) his inability to cope with unstructured teaching and caring situations.”

Senior Educational Officer to the Essex County Council – 1975

Description of an eleven year old boy diagnosed with ‘childhood psychosis’

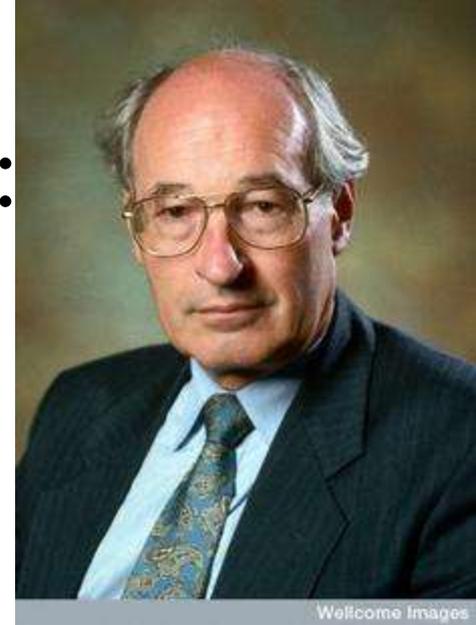
# Michael Rutter. Infantile Autism: A genetic study of 21 twin pairs (1977)

Autism defined as:

- ‘a serious impairment in the development of social relationships’
- ‘delayed and deviant language development’
- ‘stereotyped, repetitive or ritualistic play or interests’

**‘this systematic study...indicates the importance of a genetic factor which probably concerns a cognitive deficit involving language’**

**Rutter pushes for the recognition of autism within the Diagnostic and Statistical manual of psychiatric disorders. It is introduced in 1980 as a ‘pervasive developmental disorder.’**





‘Impairment of social interaction, repetitive activities in place of imaginative symbolic interests, and impairment of language development is due to organic brain damage... certain areas or functions of the brain are responsible for the development of social interaction and symbolic imaginative activities.’

**Lorna Wing, 1979**

# Lorna Wing: ‘Social impairments’ affect 20 in 10,000 children

	Socially impaired	Sociable severely retarded
Number of children	74	58
Percentages showing following abnormalities	(100)	(100)
History of typical autism	23	0 <sup>b</sup>
Speech		
None	55	33 <sup>b</sup>
Echolalia	35	17
Idiosyncratic speech and/or reversal of pronouns (ever)	8	0
Symbolic activities		
None	55	10 <sup>b</sup>
Repetitive	42	14
Overall interest pattern		
Repetitive only	72	7 <sup>b</sup>
Repetitive and constructive	28	31
Elaborate repetitive routines	23	0 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>At time of interview, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>b</sup> $p < .001$  (chi-square test).

Wing introduces the diagnosis of Asperger’s syndrome in 1981

## Warnock Report 1979

- ‘Learning difficulties’ should be applied to all children with any special educational need.
- The terms ‘educationally subnormal’ and ‘maladjusted’ should be abolished.
- 1 in 5 children will require special educational provision.

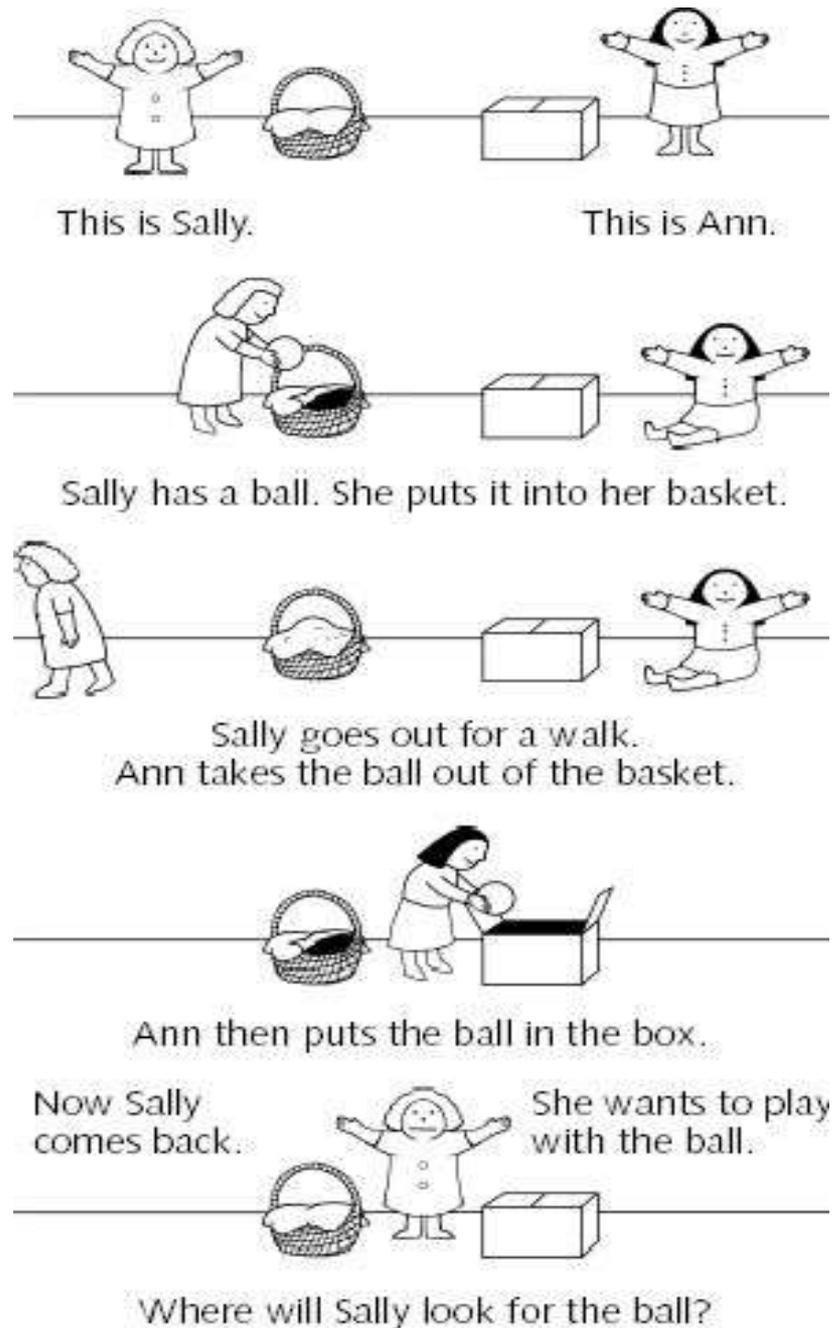
## 1981 (1983) Education Act

- All LEAs must draw up individual statements – legally binding contracts between the Authority and the Child’s Parents

## The further rise of educational psychology



- New psychological tests are developed to measure a-social mental processes
- **Theory of mind** – Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith (1985)
- **Weak central coherence** – Frith (1989)
- **Executive function** – Ozonoff, Rogers and Pennington (1991)

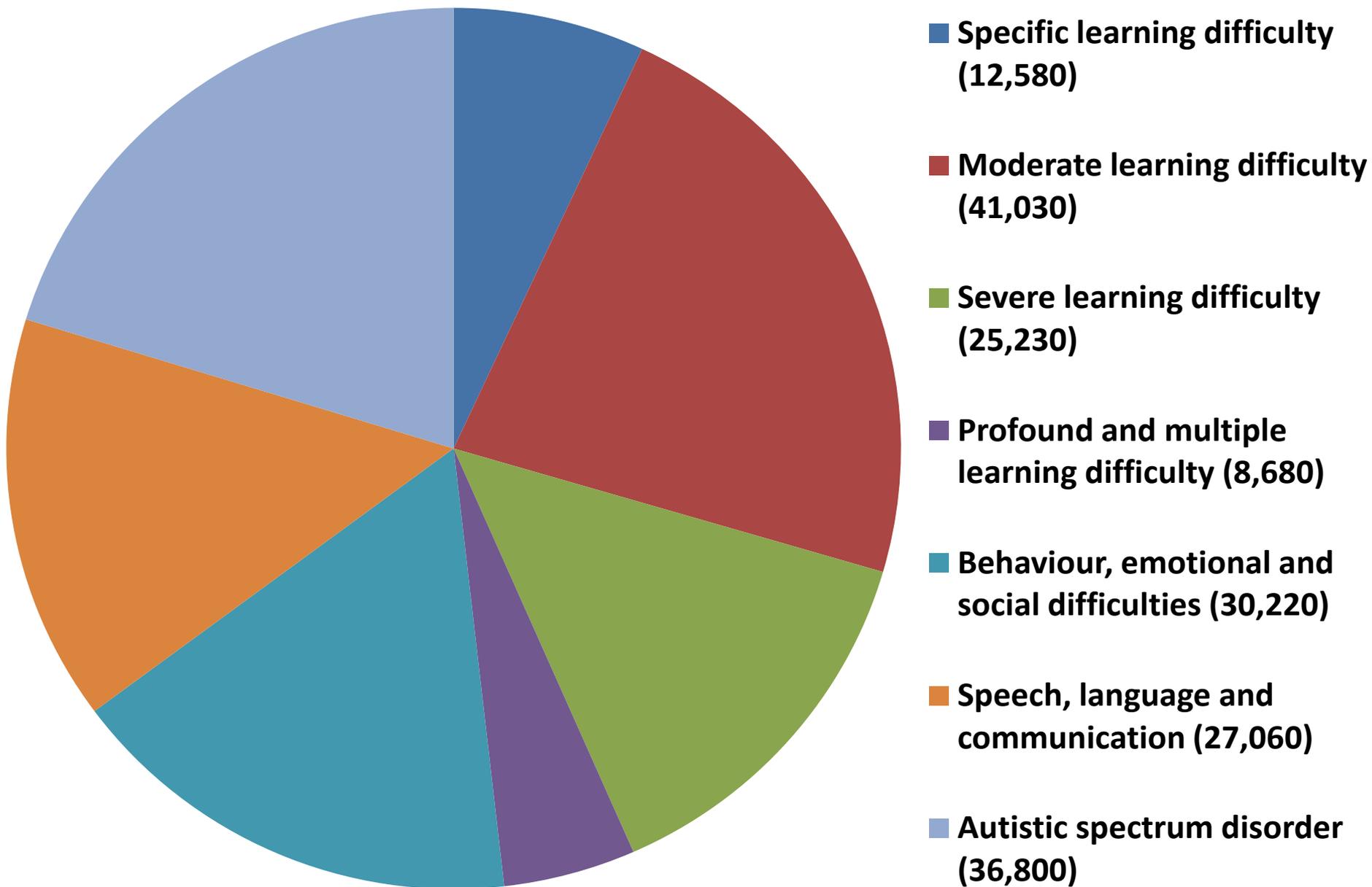


- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (GB. Statutes, 2005) (amended by Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 England and Wales) requires schools to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to ensure that pupils with ASD and other special needs are not disadvantaged compared to their peers.

- Autism Act 2009



# Number of children in England with a Statement of Special Educational Need (DCSF 2009)



# **Draft Legislation on Reform of Provision for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs**

**September 2012**

- SEN statements and learning difficulty assessments to be replaced with an Education, Health and Care Plan
- LEAs required to work with health authorities to plan support