

Young People's thoughts on the SEND Review

July 2022



Department
for Education



**COUNCIL
FOR DISABLED
CHILDREN**

**NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
BUREAU**

Part of the family



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1 Who we are and what we did

Who we are

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) is a children's charity in England. We want all disabled children and young people, and those with special educational needs, to live the very best lives possible. We want children and young people to have the support they need to achieve their dreams and be happy.

We work with the **Government**, with education, health, and care services, and with lots of other charities to help improve services and support.

We also work with children, young people, and their families to understand what their lives are like and to find ways for them to share their experiences and opinions with those who make the decisions about the services and support they receive.

Government

The people that make the laws and run the country



What is happening

The Government has been looking at the different types of education support and services that exist for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and who go to different types of schools in England.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is called SEND for short.

The Government asked young people, their families, and professionals, about what they think about SEND Support in schools and colleges. They wanted to hear about what is working well, what is not working so well, and how support for SEND could be made better. This was called the SEND Review.

After hearing the views from different young people, their families, and other professionals, the Government then came up with ideas on how SEND support in schools and colleges can be improved.

The Government's ideas are written in a report, which they refer to as a Green Paper. They have named this Green Paper Report, The SEND Review. In Spring 2022 they shared these ideas, and asked people what they thought about them. This process is called a consultation.

What we did

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) believes that all children and young people have the right to be involved in the decisions and support services that affect them.

It was very important that children and young people had the chance to share their opinions about the Government's ideas written down in the SEND Review Green Paper

CDC organised meetings with young people with many different disabilities and/or learning support needs. CDC met with young people who live in towns and cities, as well as in the countryside, from all over England.

These meetings gave children and young people the chance to:

- 1.** Learn more about the Government's ideas for making SEND Support better.
- 2.** Understand what these changes would mean for children and young people who have disabilities and/or learning support needs; and
- 3.** Share what they think about these ideas

CDC took everything that was said and wrote a big report to the Government.

You can read the big report [here](#) if you want to. This report is a shorter version of what we were told. It still includes the thoughts and feelings of the young people who took part in the focus groups and survey. We think some children and young people will find this report a bit easier to read.



Who took part

123 young people shared their opinions on the SEND Review.

CDC held **focus groups** with 121 children and young people aged between 12 and 25 years old. 2 young people also shared their views through an online survey.

Young people had a very wide range of different disabilities and/or health or learning support needs. CDC are pleased to support children and young people to share their views and we are grateful to everyone who took part. We will continue to work with children and young people and the government to make sure young people are part of conversations about their care and support.

Meanings of some words in this report

Some words in this report are written in **bold** as we think they may be a bit hard for everyone to understand. The meaning of each word is explained in the blue box next to where we first use it and in the glossary at the end of the report.

Focus group

A group interview involving a small number of people who have similar experiences.



2 What Children and Young People told us

National SEND Standards what are they, and what will they mean

The Government wants support for students with SEND to be the same standard and quality, no matter where you live in England. The Government is suggesting that they write a list of rules that all **local authorities** will follow to make sure that young people receive the support they need, in the same way, across the country.

Local authorities

A local authority is an organisation that is responsible for all the public services and facilities in a local area.

These rules would be called the National SEND Standards.



We asked the young people what they thought of the Government's plans to introduce national SEND standards, and what should be included. **This is what we heard from young people:**

- Most young people said that better training and support for teachers and how to provide the best support to children and young people should be included in the new list of rules
- There should be better information sharing, and understanding of disabilities for both teachers and other children and young people
- Some young people said that when young people change schools or class, they should meet with teachers and parents before the term starts and that there should be a consistent way for young people to talk to teachers privately about issues
- Some young people said there should be more awareness of sensory needs and there should be sensory safe support rooms in schools.
- Some young people said there needs to be more social clubs and groups with better amenities, including transport
- Some young people were very worried about bullying. The young people suggested better support in school for those who have been bullied or abused. They said more openness is needed around bullying, and more training for staff in how to stop it
- The young people also said there needs to be more counselling and mental health support available, including quicker access to it, for children and young people with SEND
- A few young people said it would be good to have more people who are in the government, that have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. They also said it would be good to have more groups involved in decision-making
- A few young people asked for more meetings and support with their **Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP)** so they can have as much input as possible.
- A few young people asked for more funding and resources in schools and clearer information about bursaries, which is money that young people can apply for to buy things that can help them with their schoolwork.

Other suggestions young people made included:

- Better SEND resources and support in '**mainstream**' schools
- Give young people more time to process information and create environments that supports this
- Shorter lessons to support attention span
- Local authorities should be set goals by the Government. They should be expected to report to Government, letting them know when they meet goals, but also if something is stopping them from meeting these goals

EHCP

Education, Health and Care Plan is for all children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities who may need extra support to access learning.

Mainstream schools

schools that do not specialise in special education needs and that follow the National Curriculum.



“All teachers should have a certain amount of training to give the best support. Anybody working with any young people should always read the young people’s profile first to better understand how to give support.”

“To decide on EHCP/support you should sit down with someone you know so you feel safe to talk about it, you should be involved, so you know what you’re doing and why, give you a feeling of independence, and power to change it.”

“Activities should be designed about me not around someone’s idea of what all ‘autistic’ people need.”

“Mainstream schools are pushed to one side, SEND schools get all the attention, when in fact mainstream schools are the ones that need most support.”

Naming a school or college in an EHCP

We asked children and young people what they thought about the Government’s idea to provide parents with a list of schools or colleges to choose from for their child. The list of schools provided to young people and their parents/guardians would be chosen by the local authority.

Some young people said a list might be useful but only as a recommendation.

- Many young people said they would not like having their choices limited, and that they should be able to choose the school that would suit them best in terms of location, culture, facilities and reputation.
- About half of the children and young people said that the decision of what school they went to should be theirs and their parents’ decision alone.
- Some young people were uncomfortable with the idea that only some schools accept students with SEND, with a few young people saying it felt unfair.

“If that is included, I would protest... it’s the parent’s choice and OUR choice, not the Government’s.”

“It would take away the option for us to go to the same school as our friends.”

“All schools should be open to all young people with disabilities.”

Education, Health and Care plans and SEN Support

The SEND **Review** suggests that no matter where you live in England, all local areas would use the same Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs) document.

Some of the children and young people who took part in this report had EHCPs and some did not. If the young person participating didn’t have an EHCP they were asked to think about whether they would want their support documents to look the same.



Review

assess, see if things need to be updated or changed.



“I don’t have a plan because I don’t struggle as much as others. I ask for support but it’s inconsistent across different teachers and subjects.”

Some of the children and young people thought that it was a good idea for all EHCPs to look the same and be filled in using the same rules, and some young people thought it was a bad idea.

- One of the main worries that the young people had was if their EHCP would still be easy to personalise if all EHCPs documents were the same, they thought it was important that EHCPs are individual.
- Some young people thought that making all EHCPs the same could make them easier to read and understand.
- Young people say that the most important part of an EHCP, and other support plans, is what the young person needs.
- Young people said that they should have a say on who is involved in their EHCPs.
- Young people said that professionals, parent/carers and young people should all be able to, and know how to, find and read their EHCPs whenever they wanted to.
- Young people said that families and young people should always be communicated with about their EHCPs.

Some other comments young people made around the EHCP's were:

- The people working on a young person's EHCP should be independent from the local council, and they should be more hands on. This means they should get to know the young person and their family, and really understand what the young person needs.
- Young people need more 1-to-1 support with EHCPs. This means support to understand what is written in the EHCPs and what that means for the young person, as well as support to be part of their EHCP meetings
- EHCPs should be done in the same way across boroughs.
- EHCPs should cover more services that young people use every day, not just their education support needs.

“If you keep the same format, it allows everyone to be familiar with it and not let people like us slip through the net.”

“All young people want to be included in discussions at school. However, it is mostly just the parents.”

“You don’t know them [ECHP officers] they just appear once a year to update the document.”



Question 3 – at the moment all EHCP's look different depending on where you live and the government wants them to all look the same. Do you think it is a good or bad idea for all EHCP's to look the same and to be filled in using the same rules?

“ Good idea – as long as the content was the same as it is currently – same sections. ”

“ I don't think it would make a difference to me but it would to staff working with me, and it might well young people. ”

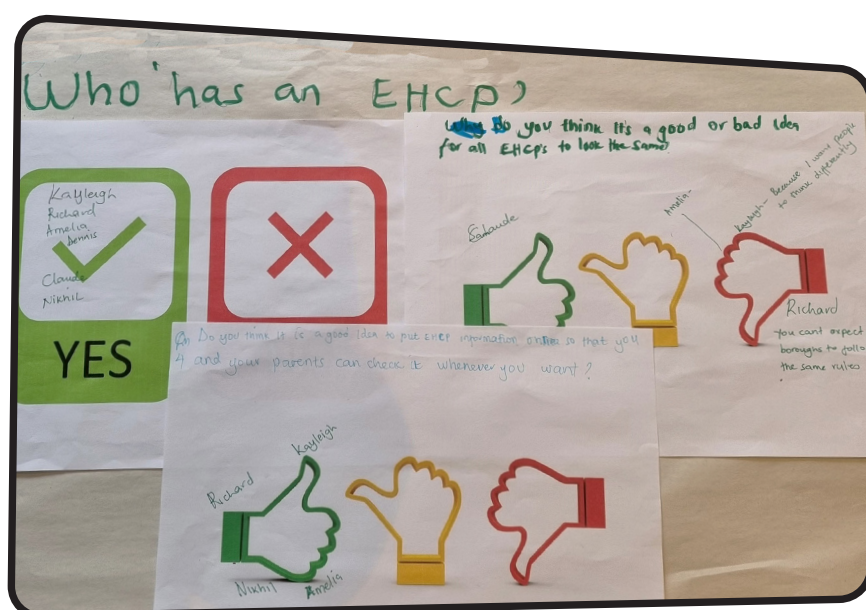
“ There should be an example for staff to learn how to check over a plan. ”

What do you think is the most important information to include in an EHCP and why?

“ What I want teacher/ staff to know about me. ”

“ ways to work with a young person – in their own words. Things to avoid saying – Not 'triggers' just things to not say to get the best response. ”

“ The needs of the young person. ”



Putting Education, Health and Care plans online

As well as all EHCPs looking the same and filled in using the same rules, the Government has suggested that EHCPs should be **digitised**. This means that EHCPs would be stored online, and could be accessed anytime by young people, parents, carers, and professionals.

We asked the young people how they would feel about being able to see their EHCPs online. We wanted to know when young people thought this could be helpful and when they thought it wouldn't work. If the young person didn't have an EHCP we asked them if they would want their support documents stored online.

- The young people thought being able to access your EHCP and other support documents at any time, and more easily, would be helpful. They said it would make it easier to see any changes and check the details of the plan.
- One of the young people's biggest worries was that some young people and their families wouldn't be able to access EHCPs if they were online because they might not know how to use the technology or may not own a computer..

Digitise

making something digital so you can get it on a computer.



Gender

When we are born we are told we are either a boy or a girl. Some people feel the gender they are given at birth is wrong and they want to change their gender to match their feelings. For example, a boy may want to be a girl or a girl may want to be a boy. Some people don't think they are a boy or a girl.

Pronoun

a word referring to someone or something for example: he, she, they, we, it.

- Some groups were worried about how private their EHCP would be if it was online. Some young people said they were worried about how secure their information would be online, and who would have access to it.
- Some young people also said that if they wanted to change their name or their **gender** they might not want their parents to see their plan if they were using their preferred name or **pronoun**.
- Young people said that they would only be happy with their EHCPs being online if it was optional, and if they, not just their parents, had a say in that choice.

“It could be positive that the family can access the online process if and when it is done right.”

“Make sure the young person is happy and signs it off.”

“You should be able to give access to certain pages but keep others private.”



Here's a PRO

Useful

It would be good to help track changes
- would make the process easy

Accessible to new staff working with
a new person

Access at any time

Would still want a paper copy



Here's a CON



Not Useful

Some parents are older and aren't
confident using technology

Not accessible at all

Some people don't have technology

If this was mandatory it would not
be a good idea, if it's a choice - yes

Improving disagreements earlier

The government wants to lower the number of **disagreements** about a young person's support. These disagreements usually happen between families and local authorities. We asked the young people what should be done to help them if they and their family disagree with the school or local authority about the support they are getting.

- Many young people said if there was a disagreement it was important to have someone at the local council to communicate with them and manage what is happening.
- Some young people said it was important to be listened to by all of the adults involved.
- Some young people asked for decisions and actions to happen more quickly and clearer communication of **timescales** – what will be done, and by when..
- Some young people said it was important to have clear communication. They said everyone needs to be open and honest, and to take responsibility for the things they have done or need to do.



Disagreements

assess, see if things need to be updated or changed.

Timescales

the amount of time it takes to do something.

- A few young people said that the support to fix disagreements should be centred around the young person.
- A few young people said they need to be able to have their voice heard in decision-making about disagreements.
- Some young people said they need to be able to disagree with decisions.
- Some young people said that when there are disagreements, young people should be supported to be involved, and their needs are the most important.
- Young people said that they need to be supported to understand their rights.
- Young people said they need help to understand what they can do if they disagree with something, the different options that are available, and how long the local authority should take to respond to young people about the disagreement. What the timescale is to deal with disagreements and

Using PlayDoh one group created models to help them reflect on their answers to this question:

“ Speak and LISTEN to young people.”

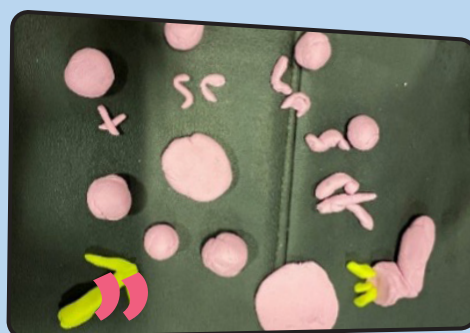
“ We need to be able to disagree with support, all decisions should be jointly made with us and our families and if something cannot happen it needs to be explained.”

“ Parents and young people need to be given information about their rights.”



“ Point of contact – make sure that the young person has someone they speak to if they need to know what is happening during the disagreement of EHCP.”

“ Need to have champions of the young people's voice (loud speaker), make sure there is an annual review (yellow arrow), make sure ALL round the table (all circles are people) e.g. health, social care, education, youth, local authority.”



“ Make sure the young person is in the middle of the circle, that they are made to feel supported from all avenues and organisations while they are in dispute.”

Common Transfer Files and Adjustment Passports

The Government wants to improve young people's experiences of moving to **further education** and **higher education**. The Government would like to introduce two new documents called **common transfer files** and **adjustment passports** to help make the moves easier. We asked the young people about the good and bad things about them.

Common transfer files

These files would share relevant information between a young person's school and the further education place they would be joining. The aim is to ensure this important information about a young person's needs is known at the beginning and the right support is in place before the young person starts.

- The main positives young people mentioned were that if all the files and passports use the same formats, it would make transition between school and college easier, and hopefully ensure that young people immediately receive the support they need.
- The young people also said that the files would be most helpful if they

Further education

This is education after leaving secondary school. Examples are, Sixth Form, College, Apprenticeships or Supported Internships.

Higher Education

This means studying at university.

Common Transfer Files

are a way for schools to share information about a student to the student's new school.

Adjustment Passport

Adjustment passports give students with a disability or health condition an up-to-date record of the adjustments they are using and what support needs they have.

Consent

when somebody must give permission for something to happen.

Jointly Written

when a school (or organisation) write a document with a child or young person.

were **jointly written** by teachers, the young person and their parents or carers to give a full picture of what support is needed, could be updated, and only shared with the young person's **consent** on a case-by-case basis.

- They should be legally binding.
That means it should be guaranteed that young people would receive the recommended support.

The young people mentioned some negative things

- They might lead to pre-judgements, or a one-sided understanding of the young person.
- Some young people were uncomfortable with the idea of their personal details being shared without their permission.
- Common transfer files could prevent young people from having a fresh start.
- They might increase the differences between young people with SEND and other students.
- Young people were worried that harmful or inaccurate things could be recorded and shared with the new college without the young person's knowledge.

“**Don't include too much personal information, I don't want people pre-judging me.**”

“**We are real people; you need to include positive things we can do as well as the support we need.**”

“**It would be useful if it leads to accountability otherwise it's just more paperwork.**”



Adjustment passports

These would be a new document that a young person can use if they go to university or they are looking for a job. The adjustment passport would help them to share all their important support needs so that the university or employer would know what is needed.

- Many benefits were spoken about including that it would save young people from having to repeat themselves, as well as from the anxiety and stress of having those conversations.
- They also thought it was very positive that they would be co-written by the young people themselves with young people saying that it would give them an opportunity to share what they have achieved.
- Would be a useful document because EHCPs are not accepted at universities or by employers.
- Some suggestions during the conversations included that it should be optional, **jointly written**, editable, and accessible in different forms - audio, braille, easy read.

- Negatives of adjustment passports included that they are unnecessary since other documents already cover this information, that it could become just more paperwork if it were mandatory, and that some young people would prefer to have the conversation in person.

“This sounds like a life saver and means I wouldn’t have to share things over and over again.”

“It would make me less anxious.”

“They would know about some of the good things you have done at school and college.”

Jointly Written

when a school (or organisation) write a document with a child or young person.



Young people's participation in decision-making for services

Children and young people have the right to be involved in decision-making for the services they use.

“Disabled people have rights. Give respect to people with disabilities.”

The young people were given a list of services which included:

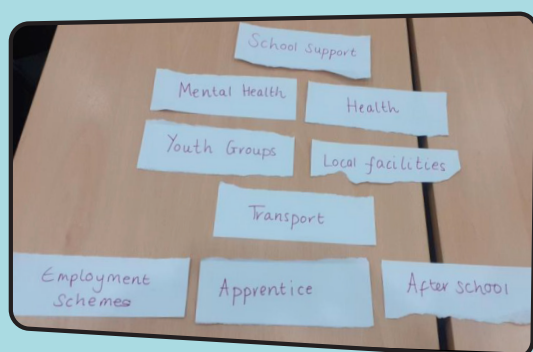
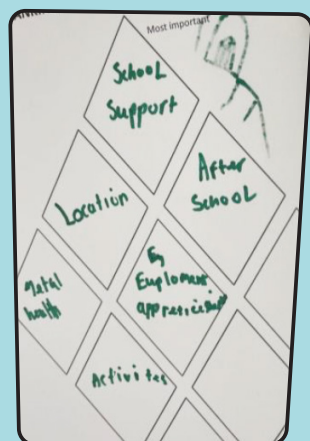
- School support
- Youth groups
- After-school activities
- Employment schemes
- Supported apprenticeships
- Transport services
- Health services
- Mental health services
- Local facilities.

The young people discussed which services they would want to be most, or least, involved in making decisions for. Some young people said they should have a voice in all services, but the services young people were most interested in participating in were education and health services.

- The most common services that the young people said they wanted to be involved in was school support.
- The next most common services where they wanted to be involved were for youth groups, mental health support, and health support.
- Several young people also mentioned that transport was quite important. Even though transport was considered the least important of the services that were discussed, young people still felt it was an important service to have a role in.
- Some young people talked about the importance of after school activities and employment schemes.

Some young people made other suggestions of things that are important, which were:

- Parents
- Rights for people with disabilities and public awareness
- Holiday camps
- Sports clubs.



“Whenever there is a busy bus, I tend to panic because there are all these people in the way.”

“After school activities are probably the most interesting, so the most important as well.”

“Different for people still at school versus those not at school anymore. They're all important but more or less for different people. Most of us don't have a physical disability, so transport is less of an issue, if people can't afford outside support, then after-school activities are more important.”



The young people were then asked how they would want to be involved in decision-making, lots of different methods were suggested including:

- Virtual meetings
- Phone calls
- Online events
- In person
- Youth group meetings
- Surveys (short and concise as surveys are not always easy to follow)
- One-to-one conversations
- Lots more online opportunities, as they are more accessible and easier to attend
- Give incentives to motivate and recognise efforts.

Participation and Co-Production with Children and Young People

In the SEND Review the Government says that they want children, young people, and their families to be more involved and have more of a say in the support they get at school and college.

However, they do not explain in the SEND Review how they will achieve this.

We asked the young people to picture how families, children and young people could participate in decision-making.

We asked the young people to imagine that they had been asked by their Local Authority to make a brand-new youth centre and were given three questions:

- 1.** How would you like to be involved?
- 2.** What would decision-makers need to do to make sure you are included?
- 3.** How would you like to stay updated?

- A lot of young people were happy about being consulted in person by decision-makers and designers and being able to give their feedback on plans.

- Many young people mentioned that they would want to be involved from the very beginning, and have their say on the design, layout, and types of spaces in the centre. For example, through a competition to submit their own designs and discuss them with the team.
- In most conversations, the young people said they must be included in making decisions about hiring staff and the types of activities, programmes, and services available, to ensure that they were relevant and accessible.
- About half of the young people said they were interested in being involved in the interior design of the centre, the colours, decoration, artwork, seating and lighting.
- A few young people said they would want to be actively involved in construction, for example painting and decorating, and that it could be a form of work experience - adding that they should get credit for their contributions and expertise at all levels of the project.
- A few groups mentioned wanting to visit the site in person to give their feedback and test the space out at various stages.

“I like this idea that we should tell them what we want. I doubt they know children as well as actual children do.”

“We don't want to read a long report, we want to see it and sit down with the actual people.”

“We could use the project as work experience to get jobs in future.”



Imagine you've been asked by your local authority to make a new youth 'centre'

How would you like to be involved?

Plan process, I want to be involved in the planning, the monetary the hiring and the general progress throughout the project.

More of like the interior design business

I would like to do decorating and like putting it together like wallpaper and stuff

Involved in the planning and decision-making.

Involved in decision-making (e.g. Planning and Management)

Face-to-Face meetings

I don't know if I would want to be

How would you like to stay updated?



What would decision makers need to do to make sure you are included?



The young people then thought about what decision-makers need to do to ensure that they are meaningfully included.

Most young people said it was very important to use many different ways of including as many young people as possible. Young people suggested:

- group discussions of different sizes
- **committees**
- interview panels
- young people representatives
- leaflets
- local advertisements
- polls on social media
- surveys to be sent around schools
- online chat rooms for those less comfortable face to face
- awards to motivate engagement.

Around half the young people talked about accessibility and comfort during in-person meetings. The young people suggested:

- having interpreters and support staff present to create an informal environment for feedback, with activities or crafts for younger children.
- having some meetings where adults aren't present.
- having some smaller meetings for people who aren't confident in large groups.

Committees

a group that is chosen to investigate or report on something.



- About half of the young people also talked about the attitude of decision-makers. They said it was important to be open, honest and clear about a project's goals and what is and isn't achievable.
- They also said it was important to create an equal, collaborative, and non-patronising space in which their contributions are heard and taken seriously, without assumptions.

“**Accessibility - communicate through as many things as you can: speaking, writing, films, discussions.**”

“**Come to us, or make it easy to come to you.**”

“**It would be nice to have adults leave you alone a bit so you can just chat, make it less interview-y and awkward - we could be making something, doing crafts while we talk.**”

Young people made some suggestions for how they would like to stay updated:

- Using email or social media, including live streams, Facebook groups, WhatsApp group chats, YouTube videos, and using Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok (although a small number of young people suggested they would prefer to keep social media for socialising).
- Printed updates were recommended through newsletters, youth magazines and progress reports that could be posted to homes or directly to groups.
- Around half of the young people said they preferred in-person meetings and follow up discussion groups.
- Some mentioned that they would want to be kept updated regularly throughout the process, and suggested monthly or fortnightly meetings.

“Put things online so we could give feedback as things happen.”

“Emails - it's not the same thing as someone telling you something.”

“There should be info sent AND a follow up group.”



3 Final thoughts

Children and young people have the right to participate in decision-making that may affect their lives. CDC carried out this consultation with children and young people with different special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make sure that they were up-to-date with the Government's ideas on changes to SEND Support, discuss these ideas with others, and share their opinions.

It is so important that the Government hears children and young people's views and lived experiences to understand how the suggested changes to support will impact those who receive it.

Diverse

including or involving people for a range of different experiences and backgrounds.



Based on the feedback from the children and young people involved in the consultation, these are the recommendations CDC has given to the government about their proposals to improve the SEND system:

- Children and young people need to be involved in the development of the national SEND standards, with a **diverse** range of voices being heard.
- Any list of schools or colleges should be recommendations and not limit the choice for students.
- Families should know what their options are, to complain or address the problem, if they are in a disagreement with their local council or school.



- EHCPs should be easy for children and young people to understand. They should be personalised and include what they need.
- If EHCPs are stored digitally, families might need support to access them, and young people's privacy rights need to be explained.
- Young people should be offered appropriate and accessible ways to feedback and disagree, and communication should be clear.
- Common transfer files and adjustment passports should be optional, and when they are used, information should be written with young people's voices included.
- Children and young people need to be included in the decision-making processes for the services they use, and the ways they are involved should be inclusive and accessible.

This report has been made possible by the involvement of children, young people, parents and carers, and practitioners from across England. We would like to say thank you to everyone for their valuable contributions to this project.



Meanings of some words used in this report

Accountable when an organisation must prove that it is behaving well.

Adjustment Passport Adjustment passports give students with a disability or health condition an up-to-date record of the adjustments they are using and what support needs they have.

Alternative provision When a child or young person is unable to access mainstream school for reasons including school exclusion, behavioural issues, or illness, education outside of school will be arranged.

Amenities things that make a place nicer and are useful for example, clean toilets, air conditioning, big rooms.

Bursaries A bursary is money given to people based on financial need.

Committees a group that is chosen to investigate or report on something.

Common Transfer Files are a way for schools to share information about a student to the student's new school.

Consent when somebody must give permission for something to happen.

Consistent To be the same every time.

Consultation When decision makers ask everyday people what they think.

Digitise making something digital so you can get it on a computer.

Disagreements when family and the local authority do not agree on what support the child or young person needs.

Diverse including or involving people for a range of different experiences and backgrounds.

EHCP Education, Health and Care Plan is for all children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities who may need extra support to access learning.

Focus group A group interview involving a small number of people who have similar experiences.

Further education This is education after leaving secondary school. Examples are, Sixth Form, College, Apprenticeships or Supported Internships.

Gender When we are born we are told we are either a boy or a girl. Some people feel the gender they are given at birth is wrong and they want to change their gender to match their feelings. For example, a boy may want to be a girl or a girl may want to be a boy. Some people don't think they are a boy or a girl.

Government The people that make the laws and run the country.

Green Paper a document that suggests new laws or rules that the Government are thinking about. This means that the changes talked about in the SEND Review are suggestions (they are not changes that are definitely happening, they are changes that could happen).

Higher Education This means studying at university.

Jointly Written when a school (or organisation) write a document with a child or young person.

Local authorities A local authority is an organisation that is responsible for all the public services and facilities in a local area.

Mainstream schools schools that do not specialise in special education needs and that follow the National Curriculum.

Mediation Mediation is a meeting between a family, the Local Authority and a independent professional to try to fix the disagreement between a family and a Local Authority or a health authority.

Personalised when something is made to meet someone's individual needs.

Pronoun a word that refers to someone or something for example: he, she, they, we, it.

Review assess, see if things need to be updated or changed.

SEND special education needs and disabilities.

Standardised when everyone uses the same way of doing things.

Timescales the amount of time it takes to do something.





Department
for Education



**COUNCIL
FOR DISABLED
CHILDREN**

**NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
BUREAU**

Part of the family