

Green paper, Right support, right place, right time

An initial response from the Special Educational Consortium

The Special Educational Consortium (SEC) welcomes the overall ambition of the Green Paper to identify needs early, provide consistent support and improve outcomes for all children and young people with SEN and disabilities. This is a huge ambition.

Whilst we welcome the ambition, SEC is not persuaded that the proposals will deliver the intended improvement or, for some of the proposals, that there is yet sufficient detail to know whether they could. In the context of successive rounds of legislation since 1981 or, arguably, since 1970, all of which have failed to deliver the intended outcomes, nothing could be more important than getting these proposals right.

SEC is committed to working with the DfE to contribute to the development of the proposals throughout the consultation process.

SEC's initial response to the Green Paper is to welcome:

- Proposals for a national template for EHC plans;
- The focus on co-production;
- The broad intention that schools and settings will become more inclusive;
- Proposals that each area will have a local inclusion plan.

However:

- **More inclusive schools and settings?** We do not see any analysis that informs the DfE proposals about what is needed to enable schools and settings to become more inclusive, so we cannot see how this will be achieved.
- **Specialist local services?** We can see nothing about the importance of specialist local services, from education, health and care, that support schools and supplement and complement what schools can do on their own; nor can we see how services will be funded, though we hope this will be part of local inclusion plans.
- **There is little detail** in many of the proposals, so it is difficult to form an opinion about their potential to improve the progress of and outcomes for children and young people with SEN and disabilities.

There is significant concern in SEC about:

- **Significant inequalities in the education system:** the significant inequalities in the education system: the over-representation of children and young people with SEN and disabilities in exclusions and absence figures, and their increasing placement in special schools, AP and home education. Yet there is no reference to the duties in the Equality Act and no objectives to address the inequalities faced by disabled pupils, including those with medical needs.
- **Matrix of needs and tariffs:** we do not see how a matrix of tariffs will make schools and settings more inclusive; a focus on needs and costings distracts from the discussion about provision, which is where solutions lie.
- **Naming a school and going to the Tribunal:** SEC does not believe that any restriction on parental choice of placement has a role in making sure children's needs are met at an earlier stage, nor that restricting access to the Tribunal helps when things have gone wrong.
- **Training and qualifications:** there are welcome proposals on training and qualifications but none of the proposals go far enough to make a difference in mainstream classrooms: proposals on training are about SENCOs not about subject teachers; Level 3 qualifications in the early years are about SEN not about an understanding of child development for all practitioners; and there is insufficient focus on the skills all teachers need in supporting the development of children's language and communication skills: the skills that underly all learning.
- **Accountability:** there is widespread concern about accountability in the system. Yet the 'top down' approach proposed is unlikely to make an impact on individual and local decision making.
- **Social care support,** through Early Help, Family Support, short breaks, is vital to keeping children in their local school, with their family and in their local community. There is concern that there are no proposals on social care in the Green Paper. These cannot wait for the Care Review and need to develop alongside the other proposals in the Green Paper.

SEC is supported by: • Afasic • Ambitious about Autism • Association of Colleges • Association of Educational Psychologists • British Dyslexia Association • Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education • Contact • Council for Disabled Children • Down's Syndrome Association • Driver Youth Trust • Equals • Guide Dogs for the Blind • IASS network • I CAN • IPSEA • Just for Kids Law • Mencap • NAHT • Nasen • NASUWT • National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools • National Autistic Society • National Children's Bureau • National Deaf Children's Society • National Development Team for Inclusion • National Education Union • National Network of Parent Carer Forums • Natspec • Prospect • Royal National Institute of Blind People • Seashell Trust • SEND Community Alliance • SENDIASS • Sense • Square Peg • Thomas Pocklington Trust • United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council • Young Epilepsy