



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Special educational needs and disabilities](#), HC 968

Tuesday 19 March 2019

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Members present: Robert Halfon (Chair); Ben Bradley; Marion Fellows; James Frith; Emma Hardy; Trudy Harrison; Lucy Powell; Thelma Walker.

Questions 476-498

Witnesses

[I](#): Ben, Eva and Jordan.

[II](#): Kashifa and Simran.

[III](#): Ella and Francesca.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Ben, Eva, and Jordan.

Q476 **Chair:** Could you kindly introduce yourselves for the benefit of all those watching on Parliament TV?

Ben: Hello. I'm Ben. I am a RIP:STAR disabled young researcher. Today I am here because I believe that the EHCP should not be seen as a process or a form to be completed—it is a child's life now, and their future.

Jordan: Hello. I am Jordan. I am a RIP:STAR as well. I am here to explain why I and many other disabled young people feel we were cheated out of the education system and treated poorly by it.

Eva: Hello. My name is Eva. I am also a RIP:STAR disabled young researcher. I am here today because before this project I didn't feel I had a voice, and I was denied my voice, as are many disabled children and young people.

Q477 **Thelma Walker:** Thank you so much for coming in and talking to us. Could you share with the group the top three things you have discovered and found out in your research?

Jordan: Happily. One of the things we found out in the research was that children were not actually being involved in the process of their education, health and care plans, which was a stunning find. The plans being made about the child were not being made with the child's information being given, or their verbal opinions, or their views being shared within it. That finding was quite atrocious.

Eva: We found out that what is written in the plan is not being followed through. Many children are not receiving the support and the correct education that they need, and they are missing out on their education and childhood, and the plans aren't preparing them for independence and adulthood.

Ben: The third thing we found out was that the plans are too educationally focused—they are not life-focused—so children are not receiving the support they need in other important areas, such as developing independence, having choice and control, achieving aspirations and life goals, having friends and access to the community. So, those are the top three things.

Q478 **Marion Fellows:** Good morning. It is a real delight to have you here. What does a quality education, health and care plan look like for people with special educational needs and disabilities?

Ben: What we found with this was it needs to be person-centred. It is not just education, or the other side, health; it should be the whole life. It should be what the child wants to achieve, and it should get their full potential out of it. It should not be about what they want to get in their



GCSEs. It is about their whole life and aspirations, so it is about working towards an independent life as well, and to be fully included in school communities, and to access clubs and activities, so that they can be involved in everything and have that normal life of a child or young person.

Jordan: Similarly to one of the points we found out earlier, another thing is that it should involve the child in the decision-making process within the education, health and care plan. The main part that the child is involved in is the “About me” section. As we have seen from a few of them, some professionals class that as the fluffy bit—basically, a nice cover-up so that the child feels happy about it. Behind the cover, it is just medical forms about what to do for that child and what they need, but without anyone actually talking to the young person and explaining why they need it or asking the child what they want.

It is also about giving the young person the option for an advocate, if they need one, to have it expressed their way, because we need to find a way for children to most comfortably and effectively express their views and opinions within it, and that may be one of the ways.

Eva: A quality plan should use a social model of disability language, so that children are not defined by labels and are not seen as a problem to be solved. Plans should be rights-focused. Disabled children have a right to mainstream education, so they should receive support to achieve this and to be able to be in mainstream education if they so choose.

Q479 **Emma Hardy:** Based on your research, what needs to change in the system for young people with special educational needs and disabilities?

Eva: A lot needs to change, we think. All of the things we have already mentioned—the involvement of children within their plans, better communication between professionals and young people about the process. Young people should know what is in their plan, and it should be accessible to them so that they can know what support they should be getting and understand it.

Ben: Education and all types of support should meet the needs of the disabled child, not make us conform to the needs of the education system. It should be a balance. A disabled young person or child should not have to fit into all the norms, roles and rules of education. It might have to change a little bit, because it is not going to work otherwise. If it doesn't work, they should not get shipped off, excluded, offloaded or hidden in other places where they are just forgotten about: “Okay, he is causing trouble—he is gone.” That was another big thing that we saw.

Jordan: Another thing—to be blunt—is not to waste our time with it. Plans nowadays are being delayed, mistaken or poorly done. They are not meeting the needs of the child, which is their main purpose. Because of the errors and mistakes that are made, children now have to wait longer for their plans, because they have to wait for the review when they can explain it. It is not explained how they can complain or protest about it,



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and it just wastes time for the professional who has to make it, for the parent who now has to experience the suffering of their child through education and life, and for the child who has to live that day where they have a plan that is pretty much useless to them.

The plan should account for the child. There should be someone to make sure that it is of good quality after it has been delivered to the system and the schools, and that it is being carried out correctly by staff. It should not just be ignored and forgotten for years and then, when the review comes around, not even mentioned or treated as important. It is something that affects the child's life, and it should be treated as such.

Q480 Chair: A lot of young people have talked to us about tribunals. Have you talked to any of the young people who have had to go to tribunals? Can you tell us about their experiences?

Ben: We didn't speak to young people; we spoke more to parents about this. A lot of them had gone to tribunals, which had been very stressful and cost them a lot of money. We learned the fact that 89% of people who go to tribunals win their case. Why waste that time, causing stress for the young person, the parents or whoever is looking after that child? Why don't they get the quality plan in place first, get it right and get it done, instead of having to waste time and cause stress that is not needed for a family who are already in trouble with some things because they do not have a plan to support them?

What we are saying is that it needs to be now. People should not have to wait months or even years. That is what we have seen at times: people have waited years to have it reviewed or looked at.

Jordan: Adding on to that, it actually costs a lot more for the tribunals and meetings. We understand that money is an issue in plans—it has a massive effect. Money is being wasted on tribunals that, 89 times out of 100, were not worth it to begin with, when it could all have been spent on better things for the plan for the child, to save time. It is about the establishment of that.

Q481 Lucy Powell: What you are saying is very articulate—much more so than many of the adults that we have in here—so thank you very much. Finally, is there anything else that you want to tell us about your experiences, or the experiences that you know other young people with SEND are having?

Ben: One big thing that we learned is that you have to please remember that we are human beings. We are not problems; we are not just disabled, or just SEND. We are human beings, the same as the rest of you. We might do it in our way, or do it a little bit differently, but remember that fact and go with it. We are this, not a problem, a puzzle or a jigsaw. Work with us—do not treat us as a problem.

Jordan: From my experience going through SEND, I would say that schools are a major focus. In the school that I went to—and I know that mine was quite a bad school to go to; it was a one-off exception—there



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were staff who were given the role of SEND but did not actually have SEND training to begin with. A case that I refer to, from my experience, is that of a child in a wheelchair not having a paediatric physical therapist with them, when they mandatorily needed it. The school sacked the only therapist that they had. Instead, the child had to wait about a few months before the school paid for someone to be trained to be the therapist. Then they still had to wait for the training to go through.

Finally, when they did get it, it was nearing the end of the year, and I believe that they were not planning on staying there, so all that money and time of the child was eventually wasted in a sense. It was something that they deserved and were given the right to, but it was not carried out because the school would not do it. There should be someone there to ensure that this child and children like this get what they deserve and what is needed for them to have the best future, and are not tossed aside and forgotten about in the system.

Eva: I think people should try to consider what the child wants to get out of their life—their dreams and ambitions and their life goals—instead of just viewing it as a medical condition and something that needs to be solved quickly.

Ben: One final thing: please look at our report on a quality and right-based framework. It is on our website: ripstars.net. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you—you have been brilliant witnesses, and, as Lucy said, a lot better than some who come here sometimes. It was really wonderful of you to come.

Jordan: Thank you for inviting us and giving us this chance.

Chair: We are going to take a very short break to get our next panel. You are all welcome to stay in the room if you want to while we get ready. What you have said today will really help us with our inquiry. Thank you.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Kashifa and Simran.

Q482 **Chair:** Hello again. Welcome to our Committee today. Thank you so much for coming. It is really important that you are here and you will help us a lot with what we are trying to do. Please introduce yourselves so the people who are watching Parliament TV will know who you are.

Simran: Hi, my name is Simran. I am a third year accounting and management student at Queen Mary University of London. I have cerebral palsy, which means I have a slight speech impediment and use a wheelchair. I believe, having gone through the school system, that I am in the perfect place to tell you what young people need in school and sixth form.

Kashifa: Hi, my name is Kashifa, known as Kashi. I am here today to talk about SEND and my experience so far. I am at college and I am with my AFK today, which is a disabled children and young person's charity supporting us into work and employment.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Q483 **Lucy Powell:** What help do you think young people with SEND need when they are teenagers and thinking about leaving school? Simran, I think you can answer that for us.

Simran: One of the things I think would be really beneficial is encouraging them to stay in sixth form as opposed to going to college. I know that I, in particular, benefited greatly from going to sixth form. This is because the teachers knew well who I was and they were able to understand me and my disability and my needs. They understood what I was saying. Also, the scribes who were scribing my exam had known me for a long period of time, so this meant that they were easily able to help me in my exams.

I also think that another thing disabled people need is good role models. Growing up, I didn't see a lot of people like me in professions. For example, I've never seen a disabled accountant with a speech impediment, so this has knocked my confidence, because not seeing people like yourself in professions that you want to enter means that you feel like those kinds of professions are not available to you.

Kashifa: I think it would be useful if we had more information about our futures, like different work experiences and a chance to try out different jobs, to know what is out there. When I was at college, we only spoke about going to college. I left school not really knowing what I wanted to do. My work experience had been at my school, reading to children a few years younger than me, and I thought that this was what I wanted to do.

Thinking about it now, I think it would have been a lot more helpful to have a wide range of options, maybe to have several work experiences or work tasters with different businesses, to decide. Having real experiences makes it easier for me to decide about what I like and what I am good at.



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In the end, I decided to work with children probably because it was the only thing I knew. This has been okay and I have enjoyed my work placements since, but I am not certain that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.

I recently visited a company in London as part of an employability day with My AFK. It was an exclusive event planning company that I had no idea even existed, and it just opened my mind to all the other opportunities that could be out there for me. I started thinking that I would like to work there.

I am now starting to question if I really want to work with children or want to try something else, but I will work until I have finished my childcare course, just in case I decide it's not for me after all. I think this is important for them to know too, that it's okay to change your mind and just to be open to trying out lots of different things, so that you get a sense of what you really want to do.

Q484 Ben Bradley: Thank you for coming in this morning and for sharing those experiences with us. Do you think there is enough help and support for young people with SEND to find out what they want to do when they get to college?

Simran: In a word, no. I was lucky enough to know what I wanted to do, so I feel like I am in a minority. A lot of disabled people don't know what they want to do. I feel that for me school and sixth form were mainly focused on passing exams. They didn't really focus on what you did after you left.

Also, I feel like—sorry, could you just repeat the question?

Q485 Ben Bradley: Do you think that you get enough help and support when you are at college or in sixth form?

Simran: With regard to support, I think that teachers do not really understand what we need. Also, the lack of funding means that they can't really help us. I remember in sixth form a lot of them were made redundant and that has really affected me negatively.

Kashifa: In my experience, no. I went straight on to a college course for learners with learning disabilities. It was all about what you need to do when you want to get a job, like writing my CV and practising interview skills. The whole time I didn't feel like it was leading me anywhere, because I didn't know what job I even wanted.

Then I started a work placement at a primary school near the end of the course and I had to make a choice about what to do next. My careers adviser and teachers suggested that I look at a course for childcare level 1, because my work placement at the school was going well. We talked about it and agreed that I would change campus. But when I started the course in September, I felt really unprepared. I didn't really know what was coming my way and it was so difficult compared with my previous course. It was a mainstream class and I had no support during the



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classroom sessions anymore and I felt out of my depth. I just could not keep up with the workload, because I had no in-class support to help me understand or explain things to me.

That made me feel really anxious about going. I didn't understand the timetable they had given me or how to navigate my way around the college. They had lessons in different classrooms and I was arriving late all the time. It started to make me feel quite paranoid because I thought my teacher thought I was not a good student and not interested in the course.

Then I started to get angry and frustrated and I told my teacher that I thought I should try a different course. I said it in the heat of the moment, but straightaway, I wished I could take the words back. But I felt too embarrassed. I was then told I could move to an art class for people with LLD and this would make it much easier for me. This made me feel even worse, and I did not know what to do.

It was not until I spoke to Kate at My AFK that she asked me if this was what I really wanted. She asked what if we could find another way and I could have some in-care support like before. She helped me to write a letter and speak to the learning support department at the college. The support was put in place immediately and it made such a difference to how I felt about the course and about myself. I still find it challenging, but with the support, it is manageable.

Q486 James Frith: Good morning. Do you think teachers and employers know enough about supporting young people with SEND when they are over 16?

Simran: No, I don't think they are experienced enough with people with SEND requirements. Sorry, could you repeat the question?

Q487 James Frith: Sure, do you think teachers and employers know enough about supporting young people with SEND when they are over 16?

Simran: I don't feel like they know enough, purely because there is not that many people like that around. For example, at my school, I was the only disabled person in my sixth form, and I was treated pretty much like everybody else. There was no adjustment or change to my education or my classes. Had there been more training, they might have better understood. But the simple answer is, no.

Q488 James Frith: Kashifa?

Kashifa: No, not really, based on my experience, I don't feel adults know about special needs or SEND. I think they think as you get older, you are independent—if you are 18 or 19, you can do this—but I still find things difficult. I still need support and probably always will. I'm getting better all of the time and find ways to cope but I don't suddenly wake up and think I can do everything that some people expect me to.

Then there are others that look at me like I'm am a child. I think there are a lot of assumptions from people. I find it hard to concentrate for long periods of time, and find myself drifting away when people are talking too much. It's really upsetting when people have not read through my support



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plan, as they would know that is part of my disability. They would say things like, "You should have gone to bed earlier". It is really upsetting.

I do get anxious, and I have found my own way of coping over the years, sometimes I put my earphone in one ear. It is just my way of being able to concentrate and feel more relaxed. As soon as teachers see it, they say things like, "You can't listen to me if you are listening to music." I feel like I got a lot more support when I was at school and even though we had meetings about me going to college, I am not sure they really understood my needs when I got there.

Q489 Trudy Harrison: Do you feel that professionals have high enough aspirations for young people with special educational needs and disabilities?

Simran: No, I feel that a lot of the time they see the disability more than the person. They judge us based on what they think we can do rather than qualifications and what we have achieved.

As I was saying earlier, I have to work harder than everyone else to achieve anything. I have a twin sister and we do the same kind of thing. We have the same kind of grades and she is currently in a job and I am not, so I think that proves there are limited career aspirations for disabled people like myself.

Kashifa: Some do, but not all. It depends on their experiences and what they have seen. In my case, I was encouraged to sit my GCSEs even though I did not get particularly good grades. My friend who went to the same school did not even get entered for their exams, and he is a bright, funny guy who also happens to be in a wheelchair.

People make a judgement about what you are capable of based on your appearance. I know that people mean well and I know they get anxious in certain situations. They want to try to protect you but this just means that you do not get to try anything because people think you will not be able to cope. The opportunities stop. This was definitely my experience. I know that I get anxious, but I find ways to cope so I know that I am capable of doing more. I do not want people to tell me that I need to be realistic. I want to work things out for myself and be able to make the choice. I do not need to be protected all the time. I just need the chance to try different things then I can decide.

Q490 James Frith: Is there anything else you want to tell us about the experiences of young people with SEND?

Simran: I think it is a great thing that young people with SEND receive support, but their achievements are unappreciated. I am doing an accounting degree and I want to be an accountant. I want to work and contribute to the economy and society, but I feel like there are not many opportunities for me to do so. I am in the first part of my degree, and there are still not many opportunities for someone like me. Society, employers and teachers need to come together and appreciate what contributions can be made by young people with disabilities.



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James Frith: Absolutely. Kashi, do you have anything to add?

Kashifa: No.

Chair: Thank you for coming. You are both inspirational and I am sure you will get brilliant jobs. We hope that what you say will be put in our report and hopefully will change things and make it easier for everybody to have good experiences at school and college, and get good jobs afterwards whatever difficulty they may face. Thank you and good luck.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Ella and Francesca.

Q491 **Chair:** Welcome to our Select Committee. Thank you so much for coming today. We have our inquiry into children with special educational needs in schools and colleges, and it is really kind of you to come and help us today. Would you like to introduce yourselves for those watching on Parliament TV, so they know who you are?

Francesca: I am Francesca. I am 16; I am from Horsted Keynes. I am severely deaf, and I am using a mic that amplifies everyone's voices here. I will also be using lip reading and speech-to-text.

Ella: I am Ella. I am 14; I am from Essex, and I go to school in Southend. Francesca and I are on the young people's advisory board for NDCS. Today, I am using a speech-to-text relay that types up what you are saying, which Orla does. I use a form of this in school, but I mostly rely on a microphone like Francesca's in school.

Francesca: This speech-to-text has a little bit of a delay, so sorry if we are just waiting a bit.

Chair: It's no problem at all; thank you.

Q492 **Thelma Walker:** Thanks for coming in to see us and speak to us today. Did you know what support you were going to get at school or college before you started?

Francesca: When we were picking a school we looked at the different support that they could offer and often it was not in a format that was easy to access. It was difficult to pick up some of the information sometimes, because we get it from the SENCO, and we would need to—sorry, let me start again. When we looked at different schools there was different support, and especially in secondary schools there is a SEND room, which is like a disabled room. Usually they encourage people to sit there for lunch. The people there encourage you to sit there. That is basically the support that we were offered, alongside anything that we got on the EHCP.

Ella: As I mentioned, I only got my first pair of hearing aids about two weeks before I started year 7, so I had no idea what kind of support I needed, let alone what kind of support I could get to go through secondary school. I only found out what it would be like when I joined the young people's advisory board, as I could then see everybody else and ask them about what sort of support they had. About halfway through year 7 I got a teacher of the deaf, who set me up with a microphone. However, now, going into my GCSE years, I don't know what support I will be able to have as I am currently waiting on an education, health and care plan, which my council is currently refusing me as they did not think that I was deaf enough.

Q493 **Thelma Walker:** Thank you. Would you like to say something else,



Francesca?

Francesca: I also got linked with a teacher of the deaf, who was really helpful in helping us decide what schools we needed. She has been with me since primary school, which is very unusual, I have been told, but it has been really useful to have someone who knows.

Q494 **Marion Fellows:** What help do children and young people with SEND need to do well at school?

Ella: Obviously SEND covers a wide range of disabilities. It depends first on the disability, but even in terms of deafness you can have from mild to moderate or profound, and that will require different types of support. In my case, personally, what I need is an interpreter so that I can access the content of the lessons and interact with the lessons. I also ideally need a note taker, so that I can get the content from the lessons and keep it afterwards. Physically, I have to watch the lesson, so I can't write it down. However, at the moment, as I said, we cannot get an education, health and care plan. We are really struggling with the process. At the moment I have speech-to-text, which works very badly. I can't get much from that. I also have a microphone, which works to an extent. However, my grades are still far below what they should be.

Francesca: What I get is a mic and I usually rely heavily on that. When I am in school I give the mic to the teacher, and that hopefully amplifies her or his voice. That means that when students answer questions I literally cannot hear their answer. Also in social situations it proves a different problem because there is a thing called background noise—I don't know if you've heard of that. Everything around you merges into one and you can't really pick out the sound that you want to listen to. In social situations at school, I find I miss out on situations where I get to learn about friendships, how to interact with people and how to be confident and empowered, because these students don't have the awareness behind using a mic. They are also very wary of SEND students, just because of things like the disability room. I understand some people need it, but when it is heavily implied that you use it from the first stage of year 7, you are basically missing the chance to make friends at the start. That hasn't been great for me at all.

Marion Fellows: Thank you both.

Q495 **Emma Hardy:** What is the difference between the support that young people get at primary school and secondary school?

Francesca: In primary school, I had a TA, which is someone to support you in lessons and make sure you are following the lesson, as well as the mic. Basically, that support was the same going on to secondary school, with the EHCP, because they reviewed it and found it was useful, which was really helpful. But going from primary school to secondary school was a difficult transition because I found that the teachers didn't have the training to use the mic and we had to enforce that quite late, which also needed follow-ups. It was quite frustrating, because I would be missing bits in lessons that were later in tests and stuff.



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Also, in primary school they don't really have a disability or a special needs room, which I find really interesting, because in secondary school they feel there's more of a need for it. That is a bit of a shame, because it is showing to the other students that these people need to be kept separate, which is, I feel, completely the wrong attitude. It should be about inclusivity and about empowering those people. Obviously, some people do need that room; I understand that.

Ella: In my case, as I've said, I didn't get my hearing aids until I started secondary school, so I obviously can't comment on the support between primary and secondary. However, I notice that none of your questions address late diagnoses and really rapid progressions of hearing loss, so I want to explain a bit about that.

Being diagnosed at a later stage in your life can be incredibly traumatic because it is something about yourself that you never realised. As soon as you get hearing aids, you will notice how much you've been missing. That in itself can be very upsetting, but the fact that my hearing continued to drop, particularly in April 2018 when I lost about 30 dB—or we found out that I had—was just terrifying because I didn't know it was going to carry on and I didn't know how to cope really. So I really think that there needs to be some kind of support in place—even though this isn't that common—to make sure that if you have something like this you can find somebody else who has it and make sense of it in your mind. It is very, very scary.

I went through five pairs of hearing aids within two years, when normally you would address a rapid progression as five pairs in maybe nine years. It is really, really important, as it has impacted my mental health as well. I believe that if I had got support put in place in school, when I first needed it, instead of now needing both an interpreter and a note taker—physical people to be in the room with me—I could probably get on well with good speech-to-text and a microphone.

Q496 **Chair:** How much involvement in decisions made about you have you had? Do you think there are people who need to be better at listening to what you want and what you need?

Francesca: I found that— Sorry, what's the question? It has completely escaped my mind.

Q497 **Chair:** Shall I say it again? Would that be helpful? How much involvement do you have in decisions made about you, and do you think that people should be better at listening to what you need and what you want?

Francesca: I feel that the EHCP is a really enabling element of that, because in the meetings—once a year, unfortunately—you get to talk about that. I do not really feel that that is enough, because sometimes support changes very quickly. You probably know about the EHCP. It is really enabling to be in that meeting as a young person, but I know that sometimes meetings happen without us. I feel that when we are older it is really frustrating, because you feel that you can make your own decisions, because it is your own support.



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Also, I have applied for funding to go to Mary Hare, which is an all-deaf school. Basically, the only reason I am going there is for the culture of inclusivity, because in my past school I have not been included by my peers and by my school, I felt mainly. I felt that the responsibility has been completely dropped with that. Unfortunately that funding has been rejected, purely because they know that I can do well in a mainstream school. Unfortunately, we are going to need to fight a bit more about that.

Also, if people listened to me they would know that I need to use a mic. My first time going into an exam, I found that the awareness with the invigilators and stuff like that was really bad. I got taken out of the exam, because they thought I was using a phone. In fact, it was my mic. That was just—

Chair: Shocking.

Francesca: It was unspeakable. Also, I have been fighting for extra time. I would go to my support team and ask them and ask them. I don't think they fully knew that I needed extra time. They didn't know that that was an option, so they just put it on the back burner a bit. After a while, I talked to my teacher of the deaf, who eventually got it through.

Ella: I am very involved with decisions made about me, but only when it is in my team in the fight for an EHCP. I speak very often with my teacher of the deaf, with my SENDCO, with another communication support worker who is in my school for another person—she will support me as well—and, of course, with my parents. Going into an EHCP mediation was not about me getting an education, health and care plan; it was just about them trying to give me an assessment, which they were refusing to do. The only people who the council would really listen to were my parents, and the only bits of evidence that they would really pay attention to were the audiology.

It is also very frustrating that it is not the council that has to look into the person in question when they are assessing you for an education, health and care plan; it is purely the parents of the child and the support staff of the child who need to gather all this information. It was particularly frustrating for my family, when we got turned down for an assessment, that we had gathered all this information together, so then it was us feeling guilty for maybe not putting the right evidence in.

I have found myself sitting in the library at school, researching everything I can about what needs to go into an application, just to make sure that we have done enough. I have been very involved then, but that is because I have been forced to be in some cases with the council. It is not necessarily so much about listening better, but communicating better. If we have missed something out, they need to tell us. Also, they need to tell us exactly why they are turning us down. It is just a very frustrating process.

Q498 **Ben Bradley:** Thank you for being so open with us this morning about your experiences. I wonder whether there is anything else you want to



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share with us before we finish.

Francesca: Schools should be given more responsibility to enable students a lot more, such as by suggesting not to use the disability room if they are a very independent person. It is about working with individual pupils, improving their confidence and their ability to be empowered to say what stuff they need. Let's face it, when you leave school, you are going to go into uni or a job, and you need to be more active about that; otherwise, life is not going to be great. Schools are the first part of that, and I feel like they are not doing that right now.

Ella: I just really want to reinforce that it is very important, as Francesca was saying, to look at how deaf people view themselves. Very often, if you find out you are deaf or are even talking about the word "deaf", you think of hearing levels and all of the technical things, such as audiology. However, it is so important to address the mental health problems that may come with it. Let's face it, we are not the same as hearing people, and we do need more support—we are different—but we need to ensure that we can support deaf people. At the moment, there is an organisation called Deaf CAMHS, and that is their main priority, but they are very small, so they can only work with so many people. It is so important to ensure that mental health is in the conversation when you are talking about deafness.

Chair: Thank you both very much. It is really kind of you and what you said is really important. You have given your time today to come, and this will really help us. We are going to publish our report just before the summer, probably in June or July. We just want to try to make things better for children with special educational needs. I thank everyone again. I ask the Committee to stand, because all the pupils who have come here this morning have given up their time and been absolutely inspirational. We just wanted to give you a proper round of applause. Hopefully, we will make the changes that a lot of you have pointed out are needed. Good luck, everybody, and thank you again.