



Permanent Secretary

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Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

19 November 2021

21st PAC Report of Session 2021 – School Funding

Dear Meg,

I am writing to update you on the progress towards finalising the cross-Government Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Review and publication timing as referenced in the first recommendation in your report:

Recommendation 1 - The Department should write to us, within a month of this report being published, with details of the progress it has made towards finalising the SEND review and setting out when it now plans to publish the review.

The Government established the SEND Review because we are determined to:

1. Improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND and prepare them for later life and adulthood;
2. Improve people's experiences of the SEND system, with services working in co-production with children, young people and families; and
3. Deliver better value for money by targeting and distributing resources in a sustainable way that meets need quickly and effectively.

In my last letter to you (June 2021) I referenced the report from Amanda Spielman, HMCI, *Putting children and young people with SEND at the heart of our recovery plans* – the report acknowledged that the pandemic had both unavoidably delayed the pace of the work of this important Review and, crucially, materially altered the context for reform. We have taken the time to reflect on the issues in the system that the pandemic has intensified, and ensured that we have properly understood the issues facing children and young people with SEND and their families.

The Government has established a new Steering Group to assist the department in concluding the SEND Review at pace and advise on proposals to be set out in the SEND Green Paper. The group brings together government departments with representatives for parents, schools, colleges and early years, local government, health and care, and independent experts.

We continue to listen to a wider range of organisations, children, young people, and their families, as well as drawing on a wide range of evidence and engaging expert fora, such as the SEND System Leadership Board. We will publish proposals for full public consultation, enabling the views of families and stakeholders to shape how we meet the goals set out above.

Improving complex systems is challenging and our proposals must align with other major strategic activity currently underway – such as the Care Review, the Schools White Paper, and our ongoing recovery planning.

Government has demonstrated commitment to supporting the most disadvantaged children and young people – the recent Budget announcement committed £2.6 billion over the next three years to deliver new places and improve existing provision for pupils with SEND or who require alternative provision. The Spending Review also delivers an additional £4.7 billion for the core schools budget by 2024-25, including £1.6 billion for schools and high needs in 2022-23, on top of the funding we previously announced. This will pave the way for implementation of reforms to the SEND system.

We are committed to concluding the Review, and as the Secretary of State set out at the Education Select Committee on 3 November, we hope to publish in the first quarter of next year. The Green Paper will outline plans for implementation, including how that will be resourced, to improve the way we deliver support for children and young people with SEND, giving them greater opportunities to improve their outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Acland-Hood', with a stylized, cursive script.

**SUSAN ACLAND-HOOD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**